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Will Europe's new constitution create a United States of Europe?

Harry der Nederlanden

At last the European Union (EU) has its constitution. Or does it? The leaders of the 25 member nations (10 of which joined in the last year), after blaming one another for holding things up, did after two and a half years of work finalize a draft document. Whether it is a constitution or a complex treaty, however, is uncertain. It all depends on who's telling the story.

In Britain, where many independent folk don't relish relinquishing their island's sovereignty to Europe, P.M. Tony Blair is selling the document as primarily a consolidation of a conglomeration of treaties that have already been signed as a framework for cooperation. Germany's Gerhard Schroeder and France's Jacques Chirac, however, wanted something more grand. They wanted an EU with expanded powers, something like a United States of Europe with a constitution with clout. Or at least, they thought they did.

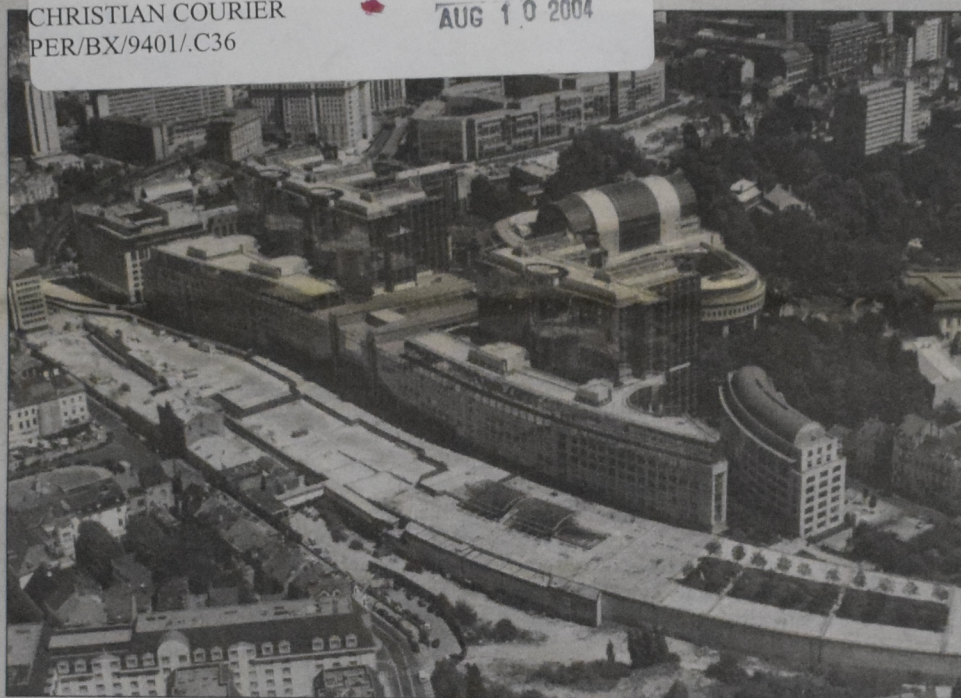
Second thoughts

When their parties took a nasty kick in the shins from a restive electorate back home, however, they began having second thoughts. Chirac, who in the past has lambasted Blair for scheduling a British referendum on the new Constitution, has now decided it would be wise to hold one in France as well. Eight other countries will be asking their citizens to vote on the new arrangement. Prospects for approval look doubtful in some countries, including Britain and Poland. A single "no" vote will scuttle the entire grand edifice so painstakingly constructed by the bureaucrats.

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The European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium.

As globalization has made us more interdependent and pushed us toward greater uniformity, many analysts have pointed out that ethnic and cultural differences have become more important, sparking conflict in many parts of the world. Europe has always been pointed to as the exception. There, nations that have been clashing since the birth of the nation-state have been systematically dismantling their border to form a greater Europe.

As that dream threatens to become a reality, however, more and more people in the participating countries are having second thoughts. Do they really want to surrender their identity and sovereignty to a gang of

bureaucrats cloistered in distant Brussels? The complaint that the European Parliament is too far removed from the people and that the role of government is becoming more impersonal and opaque has been voiced for many years. One of the functions of the new constitution was actually to bring greater simplicity, transparency and excitement to the idea of European unity. The opposite, however, seems to be happening.

Euroskeptics rally

Critics – Euroskeptics of various stripes – have been stirring up opposition. In the U.K. a tiny Independence Party has exploited popular unease (and ignorance) by comparing Blair to

Chamberlain. Blair returned to Britain waving a document. "Appeasement!" charged the Independence Party: Blair is seeking to appease the people with a piece of paper while he trades away sovereignty and self-government. In recent elections the new party, which calls for a complete withdrawal from the EU, won 12 seats in parliament. Similarly, the ruling parties in Germany and France, which have been touting the new constitution, took a beating at the polls in recent elections. Neither is in danger of being toppled just yet, but the results have given the politicians pause. There may be some consolation in the fact that less than half of the people turned out to vote.

The voter turnout for electing representatives to the Euro-parliament was low in all countries, less than half of the electorate coming out in the older member countries and a little more than one quarter in the ten new member countries. The latter turned out in record numbers to approve joining the EU recently but already seem to have lost interest. The voter turnout for national elections has been consistently over 20 percent higher than in elections for representatives to the Euro-parliament. It's a paradox that troubles the leaders: the more power the Euro-parliament gets, the less people vote. The super-parliament now accounts for about 50 percent of all new laws introduced in member countries.

Creating mass appeal

Even supporters of the EU acknowledge that it has an image problem. "Most Europeans see it as remote, incomprehensible and run by unaccountable bureaucrats," says the Economist. Politicians have also failed in adequately explaining the constitution to the people – and in putting it into a language that projects an exciting vision. The most that Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the chair of the convention, was able to say about it was that it will turn Europe into "a political power which will talk on equal terms to the greatest powers on our planet." In other words, it will create a superstate to rival the power of the US. Not the noblest of aspirations.

The document does include some sections that address the rights and freedom of citizens in ways similar to the Canadian Charter of Rights. This was

See European Union page 2...

News

European Union *continued*

supposed to add mass appeal. The mainline churches in Europe, members of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), praised this dimension of the constitution: "For us as churches," said Rudiger Noll of the CEC, "it is very important that the EU is more than just an economic model to increase competitiveness in the global market. In this regard, the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights is of equal importance."



European Parliament exterior

Dividing power

Britain is less enamored with such a Charter. Its legal system is based on common law tradition. If the constitution is accepted, this means that supreme court judges will acquire the considerable power of reinterpreting British law in the light of the new Charter. Will this remove the power to shape their own society even further from the people and cede it instead to super-judges?

A lot of power in the EU is invested in the European Commission, made up until now of a representative from each member country. These are not elected but appointed individuals. The new constitution wants to cut down the size of this body, but that means every country will no

longer have a representative there. The method of voting in the Euro-parliament will also be changed. The votes of the larger members counted for more than those of smaller countries. The new simplified voting system says that for a law to pass a "double majority" is needed: 50 percent of the countries must agree but these must also represent more than 60 percent of the EU's population. This new formula weakens the power of the bigger countries like Spain and Poland. They were bucking for a different formula – 55 percent of the members and 65 percent of the total population.

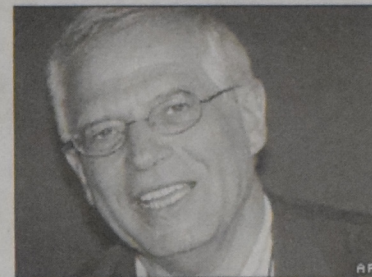
Bigger countries have always carried more clout in the EU. One of the treaties signed earlier stipulates that no member country may run a deficit larger than three

percent of its GDP. This is to prevent any country from becoming a burden on the others. But France and Germany have violated that limit again and again. The Commission has not been able to enforce the rules, and France and Germany have not been held to account and pay the penalties. (In fact, most of the laws of the EU rely on voluntary compliance.) This inequity has disgusted smaller countries like The Netherlands, which charges that there is one law for small countries and another for large countries. The Dutch pay more per capita than anyone else to support the Euro-parliament, so they may be reluctant to give more power to an institution which renders them second class.

How much power the EU

acquires with this new constitution – assuming that it passes – remains to be seen. If Europe continues to prosper and if the Euroskeptics are not able to arouse strong opposition in their respective countries, Europe may gradually move ever closer to becoming a superstate. But if the alienation and indifference of the voters

grow apace, this does not bode well for the future of Europe. A democratic order that is not able to muster the participation of its citizens eventually becomes brittle



Josep Borrell, Spanish Socialist, new President of the EU

and fragile.

[With stories from *The Economist*, *the National Post*, *The New York Times*, *the Associated Press* and ZENIT.]

The "cultural vandalism" of Europe's new constitution

Although the Conference of European Churches welcomed the adoption of a European constitution, they also expressed regret that it made no explicit reference to the Christian roots of Europe in its preamble. Poland and Italy both made a strong plea that the text include such a reference but France was adamantly opposed. The framers did accede to the pressure enough to accord recognition to the contribution of the churches to European society.

Last year, Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow charged that by excluding any reference to Christianity, the preamble committed "an act of cultural vandalism." The Vatican took up the slogan, but without much success.

Conti wrote:

"The construction of a new Europe over the past 50 years has been arguably one of the greatest political and cultural undertakings. If it has been motivated by the desire to establish a lasting peace in a war-torn continent, it has also meant excavating our history to find the roots of European identity. For the new European Union must grow organically from its past; that is why the draft preamble to the proposed constitution is so important.

"The draft refers to 'the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe which [was] nourished first by the civilizations of Greece and Rome' and 'later by philosophical currents of the Enlightenment.' So far, so good. However, it is not what is said, but rather what is missing which concerns many of us who believe in the importance of getting historical perspectives correct.

"I refer to the yawning historical and philosophical vacuum between the end of the Greco-Roman influence and the beginning of the Enlightenment. What is missing is an acknowledgement of Europe's spiritual, and particularly Christian roots and culture. This is no minor omission. It is an extraordinary attempt to write the name of Christ and the Christian church out of the consciousness of the new Europe. It is a profoundly dishonest re-working of history."

After spelling out some of the contributions made to the foundational structures of Europe by Christianity and mentioning Judaism and Islam as well, Conti says: "To deny all of this spiritual heritage – as the draft preamble does – is an act of cultural vandalism. Indeed, the historical and cultural chasm which the preamble opens up between the Hellenistic temples and the salons of the Enlightenment does disservice to the Jewish and Muslim contributions to our European heritage, just as it does to Christianity itself. All are airbrushed out of history by the drafters of the new text."



Interior of the European Parliament in Brussels

Politics

Cuba's most prominent Christian prisoner may die of starvation, family says

Stefan J. Bos

Havana, CUBA (ANS) — Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, one of Cuba's most prominent detained Christian dissidents, has urged family and friends to pray with him amid fears he may die of starvation as prison officials have denied him food for about three weeks, ASSIST News Service (ANS) learned.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and an activist internet website (<http://www.free-biscet.org>) published a letter from Dr. Biscet, which was apparently smuggled out of prison.

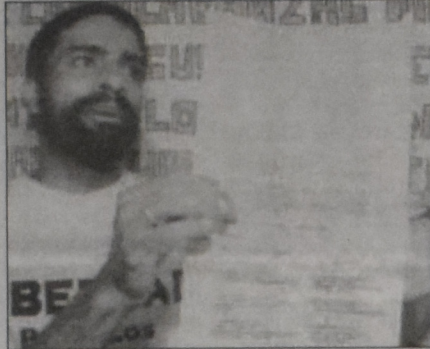
"Since June 17 I haven't had any food brought to me, practically forcing me to be on a hunger strike. No one has given me an explanation for this, not even the prison director," he writes.

"I am praying to God so that this situation is resolved in the best manner possible. I ask you, my mother and my friends to read Psalm 11. I have the spiritual sustenance and the strength that God provides to all those who love him in justice and truth."

Castro regime

His wife, Elsa Morejón Hernández, told reporters recently that her husband joined other prisoners in shouting, "Down with the Castro-Communist dictatorship" during a recent act of civil disobedience at the Kilo 8 Prison in Pinar del Rio.

Dr. Biscet, known as a Christian pro-life activist and a medical doctor opposing the death penalty as well as the Communist regime, was sentenced to 25 years on April 7, 2003 as part of a massive crackdown on human rights activists across the island.



Oscar Elias Biscet

He was earlier sentenced to a three-year term on charges of "disrespecting patriotic symbols," including hanging a Cuban flag upside down during a news conference, news reports said. Human rights group Amnesty International considers Dr. Biscet, who also heads the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, a prisoner of conscience. Cuban leader Fidel Castro has reportedly called him a "crazy little man."

Other dissidents

He is among at least over 70 dissidents accused of acts against the government. "His detention was one of many seemingly designed to cripple a quickly growing grassroots pro-democracy and human rights movement that had gained international attention and support," said CSW, which has close contacts with persecuted Christians.

Yet Dr. Biscet and the prison director reportedly made an agreement that he would be treated more humanely after being transferred from an isolation cell to a cell with common prisoners as he had been

living most of the year in darkness.

However Dr. Biscet said he has not received food rations for weeks now. "This new reprisal is directed only against me since there are other prisoners who refuse to eat at the prison dining hall and their food rations are

presently brought to them," he said in the published letter.

The family found Dr. Biscet's high blood pressure under control but found him very thin, having lost around 60 pounds since his incarceration.

Prison authorities are said to have denied requests from his family for permission to bring food to Dr. Biscet "so that he does not become ill or die of starvation."

Dr. Biscet has reportedly had two prison visits since January of 2004, but has never been permitted to receive a phone call from his family. "The prisoners have no television, they are not permitted to have a radio, a mattress to sleep on, a fan, nor do they have access to a shower or enough water to bathe, and cells lack windows," free-biscet.org said.

While ANS was not able to verify the claims independently, several other human rights groups, including Amnesty International, have expressed concern over the prison conditions in Cuba and the circumstances surrounding Dr. Biscet, who has become a symbol of suffering Christians in the Communist nation.

No light

"He was held in solitary confinement in a cell with no natural light for most of the first year of his imprisonment," CSW added.

"The Cuban State Security's practice of confining political prisoners together with common prisoners, many of whom have been convicted of violent crimes, has been condemned repeatedly by human rights groups within and outside of Cuba. Numerous testimonies suggest that the common prisoners are often encouraged by the State Security

officials to harass and abuse the political prisoners with whom they are being held," said CSW.

The human rights group said it had been calling on the UK government and the European Union to urge the Cuban authorities "to ensure that Dr. Biscet is given proper and adequate nutrition as well as any necessary medical treatment in line with the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners."

Another prisoner of conscience beaten

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), another political prisoner, Jorge Luis García Pérez, also called Antúnez, was savagely beaten and tortured by prison guards in early July after requesting to see letters and cards of solidarity that had been sent to him from around the world. He has been in prison for 14 years. Antúnez was arrested on March 15, 1990 for shouting, "We don't want communism, we need reforms!" in a public square during the live broadcast of the inauguration of the Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party.


During the years he has spent in prison he has consistently denounced the torture and other inhumane treatment which prisoners are forced to endure at the hands of the guards. He, along with two other prisoners, founded the Pedro Luis Boitel National Movement for Civil Resistance, which seeks to record and denounce maltreatment of political prisoners and to promote passive resistance amongst prisoners. In retaliation, the authorities have repeatedly confiscated his Bible and denied him water, medical attention and clothes.

Thousands of CSW supporters in the UK and in other countries regularly send letters of encouragement to prisoners like Antúnez. These letters are a vital link for the prisoner with the outside world. This savage attack on a defenseless prisoner and his family just for requesting these letters once again demonstrates the callous brutality of the Cuban regime towards prisoners of conscience.

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Editorial

Europe and its Christian heritage: worth saving?

Harry der Nederlanden

As reported on page 1 of this issue, Europe as a confederacy of nations is considering its first constitution. It's a big move. In some ways, it's an impossible move. As the name suggests, a constitution is an agreement about what constitutes or creates the present unity and future unity of purpose of a group of people. Without a sense of identity and of where they are going, it is hard to inspire, energize and mobilize people. We need a sense of purpose and meaning, not just individually but also collectively, especially collectively, for we can work together intelligently only when we have a common aim. Otherwise, we'll work at cross-purposes or flounder aimlessly.

However, Europe has undergone a sea-change over the last 50 years or so. It has become much more diverse, not just because of the influx of immigrants, especially Muslims, but native Europeans have themselves changed dramatically. According to recent statistics, fewer than 10 percent of the people in such "Christian" countries as Britain, France, Germany, Denmark and The Netherlands go to church anymore. And as the European Union looks ahead to the possibility of including such countries as Turkey, it anticipates even greater diversity.

How, then, can any country, let alone a confederation of such diverse countries, attempt to articulate for its citizens shared roots, a common identity and point them to a common vision for the future?

Without vision

Quite clearly, the bureaucrats and politicians who worked together on the European constitution could not articulate such a vision, and that is why they could arouse no enthusiasm for the project among voters in any of the participating countries. For the most part, people stayed home. Among those that did bother to vote, most came to vote *against* something. It isn't clear whether they were voting against the EU specifically or just wanted to express their displeasure with the government in power. Either way, the voters weren't enthused enough about the grand visionary project of a unified Europe, an idea that did inspire many visionaries in the past, to throw their support behind those who have been working on the project for years.

Without vision, without an overarching story or higher purpose, what does it boil down to but the working out of administrative technicalities by bureaucrats? Europe seems to have arrived at the kind of indifference to politics on the grand, visionary scale that Francis Fukuyama foresaw in his book, the *End of History and the Last Man*: when we are all more or less agreed on liberal democracy as *the* way to govern, politics becomes devoid of much that makes it interesting. It becomes an exercise for technicians and bookkeepers.

Saving our Christian heritage

Yet, this is happening at a time when the West, the liberal democracies, are facing a powerful threat from outside – an ever more militant Islam. Europe is hardly unique in this respect; it exemplifies the quandary in which all Western democracies find themselves.

The Vatican and the Council of European Churches lobbied vigorously to include in the constitution an acknowledgment of God and of the role of Christianity in the shaping of European identity, without much success. In Canada the Christian Heritage Party espouses similar goals for Canada. In the US a large part of Bush's support comes from a Christian right that similarly stresses the imperative of safeguarding the Christian heritage of the nation as the guarantee of American liberties.

However, to affirm for the nation (or for the EU or for the UN) a fundamentally Christian identity and to commit it to a continued respect and acknowledgment of the ideas, values and institutions that issued from that identity is to, in some sense, relegate some citizens to a secondary status. It suggests that they really do not belong here, that they are living in borrowed homes and habits. Christians object when they are compelled to play by the rules of secular humanism as if these embody some neutral, universal, rational standard. Why shouldn't others object when we try to insist on a basically Christian identity and program for our nations?

Gift and burden

It is true, as Archbishop Mario Conti pointed out (see page 2), that Europe (and the West) owes a great deal to its Christian heritage. Conti mentions, among other things, the church's administration of law for hundreds of years, its transmission of classical lit, its development of architecture, of the universities and of Christian humanism. It's ironic how much of Conti's list refers to things Christianity passed on from other sources. Much, much more might be brought to mind. Conti is modest.

There is very little in the culture and in the social and political institutions that constitute the 'home' in which modern Europeans live and move and have their being that wasn't forged or reshaped in the smithy of Christianity. This can be said both to our credit and our discredit.

Max Weber traced the work ethic and capitalism to certain virtues engendered by Calvinism. That work ethic or discipline, rooted in the idea of ordinary work as vocation, led to the release of great energies and initiatives in Europe, as did capitalism. But they also led to the over-valuation of work, to drudgery, to the exploitation of workers and of the environment. Every vision and virtue engendered by Christianity, it seems, also produced vices, especially when they were cut off from their religious source, a vital, authentic faith in God and love for neighbor.

Denis de Rougemont locates the sources of the Western emphasis on change and revolution in the Christian notions of conversion and of the coming of a wholly new order.

But when the emphasis on radical change is divorced from its Christian context, it acquires a violent, repressive edge. Just because socialism and capitalism have Christian soil clinging to their roots does not mean they retain a redemptive, positively transforming power.

We can go on. Without Christian notions of order and authority and continuity, the sciences would never have developed as they did in Europe. And Christian notions of authority, law and respect for property have provided the stable structures necessary for companies to be established and for trade and business to flourish. The Christian idea of man as the steward of creation eventually encouraged science and technology to work together for the betterment of material life so that nowadays we in the west live better than kings did in the Middle Ages. Even the Enlightenment ideal of knowledge as a power over nature and over our own nature and destiny is not unrelated to the biblical idea that knowledge should, in the words of the Preacher, produce worthwhile results.

With each and every one of these gifts we can point to a dark side. In fact, in recent histories that is just about the only side that is brought to light. Our first impulse is to defend Christianity and refute such one-sided descriptions of the Christian heritage of Europe and the West. Of course, many of such characterizations are very inaccurate and deeply biased, but they contain more than a smidgen of truth. There's no reason for us to defend what is indefensible. To attempt to save the Christian heritage of the West as though it were a cultural deposit, a store of capital from which subsequent generations can draw is a dangerous move. It reminds me of what the Catholic Church did with good works in the time of Luther. We cannot live off the works of our forebears, for they are not an unalloyed treasure. They are as much a burden and an obstacle as they are a living conveyance for our hope and good work.

When these habits, virtues, traditions and institutions become separated from a living relationship to God-in-Christ, they eventually turn sour. They become a bane rather than a blessing, for then we are looking to the ideas and structures themselves to sustain us and give us hope. That is idolatry and idols are hard taskmasters.

Reformed Christians, following Henry van Til and Runner, have tended to see culture from the inside, as something that we make in response to God's mandate to unfold the potential of the earth and of humanity to his greater glory. But culture also becomes part of our external environment, acquiring the inertia and resistance of nature. It is then no longer a medium responsive to either God or man. This is the side highlighted by men like Kierkegaard and Barth.

Culture has both aspects. David could not go up against Goliath dressed in the heavy, rigid armor of his older brothers. He had to set it aside and venture out on the front lines with the only weapon he knew well – and wrapped in the armor of faith.

This does not mean, however, that he never wore armor in later years as king of Israel. In fact, he even made good use of horses and chariots to fight the enemies of Israel and of God. There is much to be mined in the long and rich history of Christianity in the West, but it cannot be done by government fiat. It requires always repentance, conversion and a living relationship with the Author and Source of freedom and of all good.

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Letters

CRC Synod and Week of Prayer for Peace

On June 15, 2004, the CRC's Synod rightly declared June 27 - July 4, 2004, as "a week of prayer for peace." These dates bridge our two national holidays: Canada Day and Independence Day. Synod also decided to send its timely letter [see box below] to all CRC congregations for their active consideration and local implementation.

Since not all congregations took (had) the opportunity to observe this important week of prayer, either because they did not receive Synod's letter in time to alert their worship leaders and members, or because they were on vacation or whatever, it would be great if this "week of prayer" could (again) be observed in September - at the beginning of a new season.

Given all that is happening in our war-torn world and violence-ridden societies, faith-filled followers of the Prince of Peace would do well to engage as best they can in vital peace-making, justice-doing projects - communal word-and-deed ministries. Such activities are clearly in keeping with Jesus' reminder: "Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they shall be called sons (children) of God" (Matthew 5:9).

All of us, together with other people of faith, may want to share with our respective political leaders our heartfelt concerns for lasting peace and real justice for all people everywhere, especially the voiceless children who usually suffer most.

It would be helpful to know just what CRC denominational leaders communicated to President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Paul Martin to encourage both world-leaders to be in the vanguard of daily promoting and practicing concrete ways of pursuing peace and justice - both at home and abroad.

Also, what are their specific replies to Synod's appeal? As well, what can we, together, do next to be active "peacemakers" in the liberating Spirit of Jesus, knowing that "Our World Belongs to God"?

Gerald Vandezande
Agincourt, Ontario
416-293-8912

Dear Congregations and Members of the CRCNA,

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons [children] of God" Matthew 5:9

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, declares June 27 to July 4, 2004, a week of prayer for peace. As a week of prayer, these dates bridge our two national holidays: Canada Day and Independence Day.

We grieve with and for those who experience the devastation of violence in its many forms and guises. We weep with victims of poverty, starvation, abortion, terror, and war—especially at this time for those who are victims of terror and war. The recent wars and persecutions in various countries bring this vividly to our attention. The injuries and loss of life on all sides of these conflicts brings sorrow and a need for confession.

We confess and repent at this time because sin pervades even our best intentions and efforts. Sin runs through every human heart, every human structure, and every national government. We ask our heavenly Father to forgive us for our sins and to send his Spirit to awaken in us a love for our neighbor that brings us to our knees in prayer for his battered creation.

Remembering that our primary allegiance is to Christ's kingdom and not to any nation or state, we ask the members and congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in both Canada and the United States to pray for the needs of the international community. Pray for:

An end to violence, peace in war-torn places, victims of war, leaders of nations, all who serve in government, fellow believers who influence policy, all those risking their lives to build peace, pray that families who mourn the loss of loved ones are comforted, and pray for those who are maimed and wounded that the Spirit of God will bring comfort and healing.

Our world belongs to God, and we commend it to his care. Let us come together for a week of hearing what the Spirit has to say to the church. Let us listen to the Word of God. Let us listen to the voices of those who bear God's image. Let us in humility ask God for help to bring violence to an end, to tame the hearts of the vengeful, and to bring peace. We plead with our covenant God to manifest the majesty of his name, to maintain his fidelity as our covenant partner, and to bring peace from his loving heart of compassion.

Signed by Officers of Synod 2004

It's time to create a distinctive CRC north of the border

I appreciate the June 21, 2004 letter by Rev. Klomps. While he initially focuses on the expatriate syndrome of CRC Canadians living in the USA, he makes the logical conclusion that the Christian Reformed Church in Canada is not and never will be the same as its counterpart in the USA.

Recognizing Canadian distinctiveness is not wrong. Wanting our own organizations is neither evil nor destructive. It is a sign that we have come of age. Our American friends keep telling us how much we are like them. Some of our leaders honestly feel that our own institutions are not as good as those south of the border. Issues such as globalization and business ties to the USA are used as rationales for maintaining strained Canadian and American relationships. As made evident in history, strained relationships have also come to exist in our Christian church and school organizations.

In the early years of post Second World War immigration, the immigrants were helped immeasurably by their distant Dutch-American compatriots. However, as time went on, these new Canadian citizens began to realize that they were different than their distant American cousins. That was a healthy realization and there was nothing wrong with that development.

Similar issues were becoming apparent to the Canadian members of the Christian Reformed Church. Unfortunately, there was no Canadian equivalent to the American Van Raalte, who broke his ties with the New York Calvinists within a decade of coming to America. As a result, after a decade in Canada, the growing CRC community was slowly but surely becoming more tightly locked into the operating structures of American-controlled church and school organizations.

The effects of this limiting affiliation

continue to plague us today even though the experiences of many Canadians (businessmen, farmers, visitors and steel and lumber producers) make it crystal clear that we are not, nor will we ever be treated like fellow Americans. We are Canadians and the border defines us. To be sure, there is a lot of cross-border friendly talk but often there is very little friendly walk.

We need to have our own Canadian CRC church and Christian Schools Canada organizations, headed by our own leaders, in order to give voice to our own views and aspirations. We needed our own Reformed Canadian colleges and now have them. Now we need our own Canadian seminary and the day will come that we will have one. It is ludicrous that we continue to send Canadians to another country to become ministers in our own churches.

I am convinced, that it is only by establishing separate organizations, that we will remain each others' best friends. If we do not separate, the strain of continuing to keep two nations in single church and school organizations will turn to outright dislike, contempt and hostility.

Working for independence is a slow process, but once it begins, it is inexorable. Let us hope and pray that our American friends, who control our church and school organizations, will realize the need for separate Canadian and American organizations for both church and school. I echo the sentiments of Rev. Klomps who stated, that the sooner this occurs, "the better we will be able to serve the King of the Church (and of our Christian schools) in more than one way." The time for a national dialogue on this topic has arrived. What do you say?

Jack A. Zondag,
Lynden ON

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Letters/Opinion

Sexual orientation: looking to Scripture, praying for guidance

Don Weck

It was recently Sexual Orientation Week here at Calvin. On my way back from my religion class I stopped by the table at Johnny's to see what other profound insights Calvin College had on this issue (I have been rather disappointed in the past.) I picked up the information after having a lovely conversation with Rachel, the table girl, and headed back to my dorm oscillating between the ideas of glorious sleep or reading. Usually this was a no-brainer, but I felt compelled.

In response to the articles that they are offering [see below], I would like to offer my own homosexual point of view. Yes, I sing that way and am not abashed. Maybe sometimes bashed, but not abashed. I'm not quite sure of the best way to approach this, for I have many thoughts swimming through my mind that have been there for quite some time, ever since I've heard the various remarks on homosexuality here at Calvin. So please, bear with me as I try and put them into something somewhat coherent.

Contrary to nature?

I should probably delineate a few assumptions I'll be making here. (I was surprised to find that not every Christian makes these, but college is a learning experience.) First, I'm going to say that the Bible is the authoritative word of God, so I try to live my life accordingly. I am also going to assume that Jesus was serious when he came to say, "I give life and life abundantly" instead of "life and a crappy one at that." I surmise I can either believe that the sole work of Christ on the cross was to save my sorry soul from hell, or I can believe that Christ really does want me to have a life of freedom and victory (if there was a soundtrack to this article, I would play "Victory in Jesus").

With these two assumptions in mind, I turned my Bible to Romans 1 and Leviticus 20 (you can look these up on your own; open your Bible, it's good for you). Romans 1 is ambiguous enough, though it does seem to hint at homosexuality being unnatural. Smedes thinks that "what [Paul] meant by [homosexuality being] 'contrary to nature', none of us knows for sure." However, I am not sure I can conclude my argument with such ambiguity. He

seems to leave that end of his argument pretty open, offering virtually no explanation regarding this ambiguity.

I think we can know what "unnatural" means when we take what Saint Paul's saying in light of Leviticus 20, where God carves out an approved sexuality. No incest, no animals, no same sex. I don't see how this is unclear: Leviticus says that a man lying with a man is detestable. I don't think it matters what type of relationship old man Moses had in mind when he forbade homosexual practices: he was talking about intercourse! Neither pedophile relationships, nor temple prostitute relationships, nor even monogamous relationships are referred to here – just intercourse. That is not approved. And because of that, it seems that the former said relationships seem to be unacceptable as they are understood.

Can't change?

Now I closed my Bible and almost gave God the finger, but then I realized my second premise: life and life abundantly. Although God says no to homosexuality in my interpretation, God still can bring about something good in my life. So what about all this "can't change" business? I was a little shocked to read a couple of these articles. According to Myers's article, "the direction of one's lusts – one's feelings and fantasies – defines sexual orientation." And that cannot change, so therefore the homosexual cannot change. If my sexual orientation is defined by what I lust for, then I may as well marry my hand with some gay porn stapled to it, for it has served me well (not really) in lonely times. Since when, Mr. Myers, did we start elevating fantasies and feelings above the Word of God? It seems to me that there may be a little more to it than that. Perhaps sexuality defines orientation, and if that is the case, we all know that sexuality is easily broken – so should we as Christians accept broken sexuality?

Myers has another interesting position that says "there is no known parental or psychological influence on sexual orientation." Now, that's true: The American Psychiatric Association used to have homosexuality on the books as a disorder, but later took it off because, although they found it to be causal, they

could not pinpoint anything concrete; displaying a paradigm shift from causality to a more empirical approach to doing things – focusing only on 'inhibiting factors' such as chemical imbalances and the like (check out NARTH.com for some more on this).

But that's not to say it's not causal. There are a number of psychiatrists who are of the opinion that there is some importance to the parental influence on a child (it only makes sense to me since God elevates the family). We have the Holy Spirit, Mr. Myers. Couldn't the Holy Spirit reveal to us the causes? Maybe the causes are many and vary from person to person, making it impossible to pinpoint a strict set of causes. I know that science doesn't like that, but maybe we could just listen to the Holy Spirit for discernment (1 Corinthians 12, anybody?)

Can God change us?

Smedes saddened me when he showed how "there are many, very many homosexuals who have tried and tried and tried by every means known to faith or science to make the change, only to discover that they were stuck with what they were."

Why is it that we throw our theology out the window when it comes to this issue? First we follow feelings, and now, when we usually tell people to wait on God's timing, we look at man's futile attempts to change himself? We acknowledge that we are powerless without the power of Jesus Christ in all other respects when we ask pedophiles, sexual predators, and promiscuous teenagers to change and tell them to trust God for their healing and bide their time with abstinence. Where is that theology for the homosexual?

If you agree with my interpretation of the Bible, then we rule out homosexual marriage as 'reformable.' And if God says homosexuality is wrong, and there is good evidence that it has its origins in factors other than biological or physiological sources, then why won't we trust him on this? If it's causal, then homosexuality has been working in me since I was about five – for 14 years. Do I have the nerve to think that I will change in just one or two months of begging? Do I have the nerve to think I can change anything if I had nothing to do with the causes?

If the cause is difficult to pinpoint, then possibly the cause – or causes – are many, and healing must come in strides, healing all the parts of the broken sexuality. I've never known God to bring about sanctification all at once.

"Can God change us?" is the question that needs to be asked. Maybe healing is specific and can only be brought about by using discernment, which comes from obedience to the Holy Spirit, to see the problem.

Meaningful friendships

In one article an anonymous man, "aware of an overwhelming emotional attraction he had to another boy of his age ... [among other] serious crushes," claims that those desires came to "nothing but teenage friendships." I want to remind the church of the relationship between Jonathan and David and to say how depressed typical same sex relationships make me. Does the phrase "your love was greater than that of any women" not mean anything to the American church? That sure sounds a lot like an "overwhelming emotional attraction developed to another boy of [the same] age."

It seems that, when defining same-sex relationships, God was more freeing than restrictive: he only forbade sex! I've heard countless exhortations to heterosexual couples: sex is a small part, sex is a part, and we focus too much on sex. So why so much emphasis on sex for the gay commu-

nity? You see, my fellow gays, I have good news: we get to have deep meaningful emotional attachments with those of the same sex – just let the Holy Spirit be your guide. I'm sorry to say that many heterosexuals are not prepared to give that, but we are all works in progress.

This is a humble attempt to outline what's in my head. I do not think I've fully said everything and expect much rebuttal, but at least I gave some food for thought. Trust me, I want so very much for gay sex to be okay, but, in choosing to listen to God, I cannot see this as acceptable. I'm also not trying to belittle anyone's experience or give the impression that my life is all peaches. I've wrestled and continue to wrestle with a lot. But I have hope that I can both be in accord with God's word and experience a blessed life and I want to extend that hope to anyone who needs it. Call me if you want to talk some more, I'd love to chat with you.

Weck responds to the following articles:

"Like the Wideness of the Sea" by Lewis Smedes
 "Accepting What Cannot Be Changed" by David G. Myers
 "No Easy Victory" anonymous

Don Weck's article appeared in the May 7, 2004 (end of the year) Calvin College Chimes and is reproduced here by permission.

Gay, married, blessed

With rather frequent articles and letters to the editor concerning gays, particularly in connection with First Toronto, I wish to share a bit of my own life's story.

In 1968 at a certain point in my life, I had a knife on my wrist. I reasoned, "I'm going to hell sooner or later anyway. After all, God rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah." I had been guilty of engaging in oral and anal sex with a pastor and a church organist. The pastor had a wife and family in the parsonage. He was my serpent.

In 1969 a couple from another congregation got my wife and myself together on a blind date. The following year, we were married. I was naive. I assumed that if I got a wife and married her, all those homosexual urges and crushes would go away. Not really.

When I revealed to my wife, after we were married, that I was actually a homo, she responded in the "nuchter" (levelheaded, unexcited, down-to-earth) way: "As long as there is never a man sleeping between us, I won't worry about it."

I have never practised it since 1968, but Satan has never let up with temptations. A modern application of Hebrews 11 might read: "By faith straight [Mary] married gay [Paul], and the Lord blessed them with healthy children."

Soli deo gloria!

Name withheld

Book Review

Bassam Madany: a steady voice in an unsteady world

Harry Antonides

What does the future hold for relations between Christianity and Islam? That is uncertain, but one thing is clear: both religions have a message and a mandate. Christianity has a mandate to go into all the world and to preach the gospel, a gospel of salvation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Islam has a mandate to practice jihad and to bring the non-Muslim world under the rule of Allah and the injunctions of the Quran. (George W. Braswell, Jr.)

How do we know what the religion of Islam, professed by more than a billion people, really stands for? On the one hand, Muslim leaders in the western democracies assure us that Islam is a religion of peace, and they quote from the Quran to back up this claim. They are assisted in this effort by such sanitized documentaries shown on American television as *Islam: Empire of Faith and Legacy of the prophet Muhammad*.

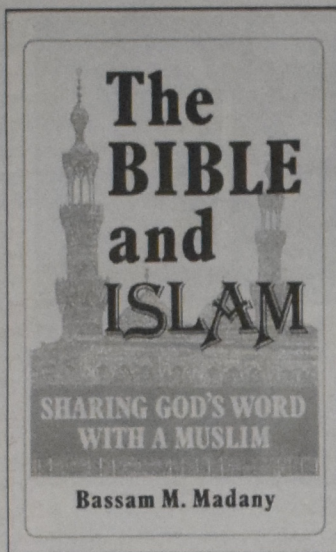
Even President Bush insists that Islam is a religion of peace. But does he really know this? Or is he being diplomatic not to arouse the wrath of American Muslims?

Is 9/11 a precursor?

On the other hand, September 11, 2001, confronted us with a very different face of this religion. After all, the perpetrators of that spectacular crime left no doubt that they were motivated by their belief that they were obeying Allah and earning a special place in heaven for their "martyrdom." They were following the order given in the name of Allah by Osama bin Laden in 1998 when he called on all Muslims to kill Americans and Jews wherever they could.

What evil forces lurk behind Al Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas, and similar terrorist organizations now causing great stress and widespread fear of coming disasters? How can we live together in one world with our differences? What will it take to avert the dreadful events of which 9/11 may be an ominous precursor? Are we inevitably drifting into a "clash of civilizations" that will smash whatever good modern culture has produced?

These are the kind of existential questions that crowd in on us when we reflect on the current



world stage. There is obviously no unity within the West about the nature of the threat we face or about the way we should defend ourselves. Many are baffled by the depth of conviction of the radical followers of Islam (Islamists) who hold to the idea of Jihad, that is, holy warfare.

Who better to enlighten us than someone who was born into the Arab world, speaks the language, and knows its history. Bassam Madany is well suited to be our guide in finding our way through the thorny questions we face.

He is a Christian minister who spent most of his working life preaching the good news of the gospel to the Arab world. Born in the province of Antioch, Syria, he received his early education in British and French schools. In 1950 he immigrated to the United States where he studied for the ministry. He served as the Back to God Hour Arabic broadcast minister from 1958 till his retirement in 1994. He also taught a number of courses in Middle East history. He and his wife Shirley now live in retirement near Chicago, where they operate a busy Internet information centre focused on the Middle East and the religion of Islam.

The Bible and Islam

The Rev. Madany has written extensively about his 36-year ministry to the Muslim world. This position gave him the opportunity to interact with tens of thousands of listeners who responded to his radio broadcasts. I want to draw attention to two of his publications.

The Bible and Islam: sharing

God's Word With a Muslim was first published in 1979. Its most recent printing with a new concluding chapter was published in 2003. It is an excellent introduction to the core teachings of Islam as well as a refresher course in Christianity. Here, in the author's own words, is the thrust of this study:

"It is equally my conviction that a formal adherence to the Bible as the Word of God, does not equip a person to be a missionary to Muslims. We need to grasp the purpose of the Word. In this book you will find a special emphasis on the redemptive character of the gospel. Biblical revelation finds its focus in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Islam makes it doubly necessary to emphasize and re-emphasize that the Messiah did not come merely to teach and to heal, but to redeem his people from their sins.

"...Muslims are taught that man is not really sinful in the biblical sense of the word, and thus needs no redemption. It is extremely important therefore that we keep on emphasizing this biblical teaching that the Messiah came from God specifically to deal with the awful imperialism of sin."

The first chapter sets out the heart of Christian ministry as that is summarized in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. Madany insists that St. Paul's teaching about human sinfulness, salvation by grace through Christ's death and resurrection, and the call to repentance and faith is what also must be presented to the Muslims.

Gospel versus Quran

At the same time he stresses the need for understanding what has made Islam such a prominent force in the world today. He explains what are the tenets of the Islamic faith that provide Muslims with a strong built-in aversion to the Christian gospel.

For example, though the Quran pays considerable attention to Jesus, it considers him to be inferior to Muhammad because the latter received the final, uncorrupted, eternally existent revelation from Allah, which supersedes all previous revelations. Muslims do not believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross.

Further, Muslims consider the belief that Jesus is the Son of God blasphemous. They think that this

would mean that God is not one but is divided, and that would make him less than complete and perfect – and therefore less than divine.

Another core teaching of Islam that is fundamentally at odds with biblical religion is the belief that salvation is not a gift of God's grace, but can be obtained by obeying all the commands for right living. That includes a strict regimen of prayer, alms giving, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, and sacrificing one's life for the advancement of Islam. Redemption is possible by obtaining the right knowledge and living according to all the commands of the Quran and the Hadith (the collected sayings of Muhammad).

The Quranic insistence that every aspect of life must come under the direct rule of Islamic law is at the heart of the conflict between Islam and the Christian idea of freedom. Madany writes: "Islam is more than religion, and has always maintained an exclusivist political worldview. It has no room for non-Muslim entities (i.e., states) to freely exist within the context of the Household of Islam."

Where such laws (sharia) are put into effect there is no freedom of religion, nor freedom of any other kind. In fact, where sharia law rules, it is a crime punishable by death to convert to another religion. Invariably, such regimes strictly prescribe the place of women to one of servitude.

Madany shows that during its 1400 years of existence internal divisions have rocked Islam, leading to the existence of divergent streams of thought. The author provides fascinating details of the conflict between these factions, often fought with deadly ferocity. He describes this a fierce battle between moderates, who are willing to co-exist and interact with the world outside Islam, and "Utopian Muslims whose vision is to re-create a world Islamic order..."

A panoramic perspective

The second publication prepared by Bassam and Shirley Madany is a collection of articles (some in the form of book reviews) available on CD, *Occasional Papers on Islam No. 1*.

These 33 articles explore all the significant issues related to the meeting of the Muslim and Western world. Here are some of the topics dealt with in this collection:

American Muslims, Islam is more than a religion, Islam and war, Jesus in the Quran, Muslims and Christians in dialogue, the attraction of Islam, the world After 11 September 2001, the complex nature of Middle Eastern relations.

These two publications provide a panoramic view of one of the most pressing issues of our time. The authors have managed to pull together a great many strands of a very complex reality. You will get acquainted with outstanding Muslim teachers who pleaded for moderation and goodwill toward the non-Muslim world – and sometimes paid for it with their lives. You will learn of some of the most dedicated and able Christian missionaries to the Muslim world. All of this is interspersed with personal experiences of the two authors.

In short, these two publications will serve to give the readers an excellent overview of what for many has become an incomprehensible jumble of religious conflict and political turmoil.

What makes these publications especially valuable is that they are written with a deep commitment to biblical truth and a profound love for the Arab people. At the same time these authors have no illusions about the dangers inherent in radical Islam. This is how Bassam Madany puts it:

"I write...as a Christian of Middle Eastern roots. I do hope, perhaps, I should say, I wish that the Islamic world would somehow experience a radical change in the direction of democracy and true freedom for its teeming millions. If not, the forecast remains for a very turbulent future. But as a Christian who takes the Bible seriously, I live in the light of the Christian hope as expounded by Saint Paul."

Bassam and Shirley Madany have developed their Middle East Resources (MER) ministry: www.levant.info. They can also be reached by e-mail at MER@levant.info. Copies of *The Bible and Islam*, are also available by writing: The Back to God Hour, P.O. Box 5070, Burlington, ON L2R 3Y8. *Occasional Papers on Islam No. 1*, 2004, is available on CD at a cost of \$3.50. Their mailing address is: 106 East 162nd Place, South Holland, IL, USA, 60473 - 2172.

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Church

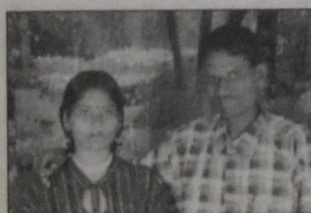
Chinese house church leaders released

China (Compass) – Philip Xu Guoxing, a prominent leader of an unregistered house church movement based in Shanghai, was released from a labor camp June 7. Xu served 18 months in the camp for setting up unregistered house churches in East China. According to a close relative, he has now returned to Shanghai to be with his wife and little daughter. First arrested in March 1980, Xu was again arrested and jailed in 1989 and 1997. He performed hard labor and suffered beatings during more than six years in “re-education thru labor” camps, punishment for his refusal to join the government-controlled Three Self Patriotic Movement. Even though Xu’s fourth imprisonment has taken its toll on his health, he has consistently refused to leave China, believing God has called him to stay to build up the church.

The 100 members of the China Gospel Fellowship who were arrested in Wuhan city June 11 have been released from police custody. They have been told to go to their home towns and villages, where they are required to stay. Since many of those arrested are evangelists who travel widely throughout China, this is an effort to control their movements. In addition, they must report to the local authorities at regular intervals.

Hindu extremists kidnap pastor’s wife

India (Compass) – Hindu extremists who kidnapped the wife of a Christian pastor in India six weeks ago are still holding her captive. Local police have refused to make any attempt to find Manulaben Dinana, 23. The kidnappers were identified by eyewitnesses as members of a local group of Hindu extremists. Dinana is the wife of Pastor Dharmesh Ninama, who himself has been assaulted twice by the same group, once in 2002 and again in 2003. Despite ongoing appeals, officials have taken no action. Meanwhile, Dinana remains in captivity and her husband fears for her life.



Manulaben Dinana and her husband

Sri Lankan cabinet approves anti-conversion law

Sarah Page

DUBLIN (Compass) – On June 18, the Sri Lankan Cabinet gave initial approval for a draft bill designed to prevent religious conversions. The “Act for the Protection of Religious Freedom” will now be revised by the government’s legal draftsmen before being enacted as law.

Two separate acts were initially proposed to parliament, but a milder version lost out when parliament was dissolved on the day the bill was proposed – one by a minority party and one by the Minister for *Buddha Sasana* (Buddhist Affairs).

Following the suspension of parliament on June 8, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, the Minister for *Buddha Sasana*, presented his own draft bill to the cabinet. The “Act for the Protection of Religious Freedom,” much wider in scope than the one proposed earlier, was based on recommendations put forward by the Buddha Sasana Commission of 2002.

The 2002 commission called for the introduction of anti-conversion laws, and the creation of an informal court system or *Sanghadhikarana*, presided over by Buddhist monks. The *Sanghadhikarana* would resolve village level disputes without reference to the police or courts of law.

Observers are concerned that the introduction of the *Sanghadhikarana* in tandem with anti-conversion laws could have serious implications for religious minorities.

Wickremanayake’s bill effectively makes conversion from one religion to another under any circumstances a criminal offense. Section 2 stipulates that no person shall convert or attempt to convert or aid or abet acts of conversion of a person to a different religion.

If the bill becomes law, Sri Lanka will break with several international conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Covenant stipulates that no one should be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or adopt a religion of his own choice. Anti-conversion legislation itself could be seen as a form of coercion.

Despite this, Sri Lanka seems determined to adopt legislation modeled after similar laws in India.

The campaign to introduce anti-conversion laws began soon after the Buddha Sasana Commission in



Buddhist temple Sri Lanka

2002 and intensified in 2003, with 91 attacks on Christians and churches last year.

Until the campaign began, most Buddhists in Sri Lanka lived peacefully with adherents of other faiths. However in 2002, senior Buddhist clergy became disturbed by the decline of Buddhism and the growth of Christian churches in rural areas. The 2002 commission was an attempt to address this issue. One source confirmed to Compass that, during the commission’s tenure, the clergy laid out a clear strategy to suppress the growth of Christianity and stir up popular opposition to the Christian faith.

In September 2003, over 1,500 Buddhist monks gathered for an anti-conversion rally in Colombo. They accused Christians of offering financial enticements to the poor to encourage them to convert – a claim which Christians vehemently denied.

Tensions increased in December 2003 when the well-known Buddhist monk Gangodawila Soma, a key figure in the anti-conversion campaign, died of a heart attack while traveling in Russia. Christians were immediately accused of a conspiracy leading to his death, despite three autopsies showing that Soma died of natural causes.

In January 2004, a group of Buddhist monks launched a fast, demanding that the government enact anti-conversion laws within the next 60 days. Parliament agreed in principle and the fast was called off.

However, when President Chandrika Kumaratunga dissolved parliament in February and called for snap elections, the introduction of the new law was postponed. The

Buddhist clergy immediately formed the JHU party to contest the elections in April. They won nine seats and eventually formed an alliance with the president, effectively giving them considerable power in government.

The JHU now finds itself in a difficult position. Having vowed not to vote with the government on any issue, they are now unable to vote in favor of the new legislation.

Even as the cabinet gave initial approval for the new legislation, a fresh attack was underway. On June 18, several Buddhist monks drove through the village of Wadduwa in a van, calling residents to a protest

march the following day. On June 19, about 50 monks led a crowd of 150 people to the local Christian Fellowship Church and staged a protest rally. Police officers arrived at the scene but were unable to control the mob. The crowd broke into the church, threw chairs at the altar, pulled down scripture banners and verbally threatened the daughters of the pastor, who was absent at the time.

On Sunday, June 20, police officers assigned to protect the church arrived before the morning service and managed to prevent a small group of protestors from breaking into the building. However, a larger crowd of 200 people soon arrived, waving banners and placards. Bricks, stones and petrol bombs were thrown at the church, damaging the roof and windows. Police officers used tear gas in an effort to dispel the crowd; in return, they were pelted with stones.

The pastor was finally forced to announce that he would suspend all meetings at the church.

The disturbance in Wadduwa was the latest in a series of 50 incidents throughout Sri Lanka in the first six months of 2004.

Sri Lankan Christians have asked the international community to support them in protest against the new legislation.

Key provisions of anti-conversion legislation

The bill introduces itself as legislation that will strengthen the “mutual trust/unity that exists among religions and with a view to protecting the religious freedom that people have enjoyed in the past. An Act to provide for the prohibition of conversion to another religion forcibly or by use of force or inducement, or by fraud, or by unethical means or in any other manner ...”

The key focus of the bill appears to be on the person responsible for the conversion, rather than the person who actually converts, although both are covered by the bill. Section 2 states: “No person shall convert or attempt to convert another person to another religion, and no person shall provide assistance or encouragement towards such conversion to another religion.”

Sections 3, 4 and 5 deal with “conversion by force,” which includes persuading someone to attend “prayers or prayer meetings of any religion of which he is not a member.” This applies particularly to any employer or person holding a position of trust or responsibility, including teachers, hospital staff and children’s caregivers.

Under Section 5(v), if conversion is “committed” by a group of persons, “every director or shareholder ... partner, member, employee or officer of that group or company shall be guilty of an offense.”

Under Section 5(vi), any non-permanent citizen of Sri Lanka who is found guilty of an offense under this Act may be expelled from the republic and banned from re-entry.

Under Section 6, court action against conversion may be initiated by the police, by any person “affected aggrieved by an offense” or by anyone “interested in the welfare of the public who has reason to believe that the provisions of this Act have been contravened.”

Church

Evangelicals in Chile explain their recent growth

Manuel Quintero

Santiago (ENI) – Chile has one of the fastest growing Evangelical communities in Latin America even though its relatively successful economy, in a continent plagued with poverty and despair, is seen as a potential counterpoint to this situation.

Chilean Evangelicals – or those who do not identify with any organized, traditional confession from the Protestant churches – are mostly Pentecostals and today they represent more than 15 per cent of the 16 million population.

They have shown rapid growth in recent years according to the most recent census, especially against the dominant Roman Catholics, but have still to match the 25 per cent of Evangelicals in Guatemala's population of 14 million. Brazil, South America's most populous country with an estimated 180 million people, counts Evangelicals at some 14 per cent.

Because of Chile's relative prosperity, the trend could be seen contradicting a wisdom that used to suggest Pentecostals find their most fertile ground for growth among the poorest. Those holding that theory believe that sustained

economic expansion and decreasing poverty acts to cut down the growth of Pentecostals. This is not so in Chile.

For Bishop Jorge Mendez, from the Pentecostal Filadelfia Church and secretary general of the Coun-

cil of Pastors of Chile, a key factor in this unprecedented growth is witness and preaching.



cil of Pastors of Chile, a key factor in this unprecedented growth is witness and preaching.

"From the very beginning we teach new converts to preach, to give thanks for what they have graciously received," Bishop Mendez told Ecumenical News International. "They also are aware of the

importance of speaking about their conversion and the radical change in their lives as an evangelical witness to the community."

"The evangelical church in Chile is good at preaching. It is a church that visits the hospitals, that helps

its home is open for the holding of worship.

Another crucial factor is the significant participation of youth, said the Rev. Ricardo Mella, president of the Pentecostal Church Eben Ezer, in Concepcion, the country's second largest city.

"Youth find a new and favorable setting in our churches, particularly those who come from broken families," he asserts. "They feel neglected at home and the church welcomes them and makes them feel comfortable. They also feel recognised as human beings, something quite unusual at home. Then they share these feelings with their friends, and invite them to join the congregation."

This opinion is shared by Bishop Jose Flores, president of the Communion of the Brothers Mission, a church with a long ecumenical tradition in the country, and one of the founders of the Latin American Council of Churches.

"Youth are treated as human beings. In the church they hear, for the first time, that God loves them, that their brothers love them. They come from ruined families, where the father may be jobless and an alcoholic

and the mother spends all her time earning a meagre living," contended Flores.

The Rev. Juana Alborno, head of the Church of the Apostolic Universal Mission, is a woman renowned for her work in the field of human rights who thinks Evangelical growth is related to social and technological changes over the past few decades.

"These changes have given birth to a culture of success, in which people are supposed to wear fancy clothes and to consume certain goods to show top-class taste," said Alborno. "This puts a lot of strain on families, forcing them to work to excess to achieve a standard demanded by the society around them."

"Hence people come to church to find the spirituality that they have lost in the secular world. They feel materialism is wearing down their values and come to the churches with this desire; for the soul of Chile is hurting."

Alborno noted, "We do not lack material goods as in other Latin American countries, but we do have a spiritual vacuum here. This helps to spur growth of the churches, as people need something that meets their spiritual needs."

Christian mother in Jordan loses right to raise her own children

Custody awarded to Muslim uncle

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass) – An Islamic court in Jordan has rejected a teenage Christian girl's lawsuit to cancel her Muslim uncle's legal guardianship over herself and her younger brother.

The June 20 ruling was a setback for Christian widow Siham Qandah, whose estranged brother Abdullah al-Muhtadi has been trying for the last six years to take custody of her two minor children to raise them as Muslims.

Amman's Sharia Court had ordered an investigation in April into allegations that al-Muhtadi had embezzled from Qandah's children nearly \$20,000 of their U.N.-allocated trust funds, currently held under the jurisdiction of the Widows and Orphans Fund of the Jordanian army.

If ruled guilty, al-Muhtadi would have been disqualified from serving as the children's legal guardian.

The Islamic court's blanket dismissal of objections to al-Muhtadi's guardianship again raised

the legal possibility that Qandah's children could be forcibly taken away from their mother to be raised by their Muslim uncle until age 18.

Qandah herself could also be jailed for disobeying orders from the Supreme Islamic Court of Jordan to hand over her daughter Rawan, now 15, and son Fadi, 14.

"Now Siham is in real trouble," sighed a Christian friend from Amman.

However, advocate Rateb al-Dhaher, who is providing legal counsel to Qandah and her daughter Rawan, promptly filed an appeal against the new ruling.

In announcing his dismissal of the case, Judge Mahmud Zghul declared Rawan's lawsuit against her maternal uncle "invalid ... and without cause for litigation."

According to Middle East Concern, a Christian advocacy group monitoring Qandah's case, Judge Zghul said he ruled in favor of the Muslim guardian "because all withdrawals from the children's trust account have been duly authorized by a judge, as required."

One of the questionable debits was approved by an Islamic court judge in Irbid, where Qandah's child custody case was tried in northern Jordan, and another was signed by the presiding judge of Jordan's Supreme Islamic Court.

Despite the lawyer's objections, Judge Zghul refused to order any further judicial investigation into al-Muhtadi's alleged fraudulent use of the large sums of money he had withdrawn from his wards' trust funds.

"This judge knows that if he rules against Siham's brother, other judges will be in trouble," one of Qandah's friends told Compass. "So he doesn't want to approve an investigation, and then have to call these judges to court to be accused of wrongdoing."

Baptized Christians, Rawan and Fadi were orphaned 10 years ago when their soldier father died serving in the U.N. Peacekeeping Forces in Kosovo. When Qandah went to register for their orphan benefits shortly after their father's death, an Islamic court produced a

"conversion" certificate, claiming her husband had converted to Islam three years before his death without telling his Christian family.

Their father had not even signed the document, but under Islamic law it could not be contested. So as minors, both children's legal identity changed to Muslim, and only when they reach 18 years of age will they be allowed to choose whether to remain "Muslim" or return to their Christian identity.

Meanwhile, their Christian mother was not allowed to handle their financial affairs, so Qandah asked al-Muhtadi to serve as their Muslim guardian. Although estranged from his Christian family since his conversion to Islam as a teenager, Qandah's brother agreed to receive and forward the children's monthly orphan benefits.

But he soon began appropriating some payments, and in 1998, he launched a four-year lawsuit to take custody of the children away from his sister so he could raise them as Muslims. When Qandah

lost her final appeal in the case in February 2002, Jordan's highest court ordered her to surrender the children to her brother's custody.

She and her children have since gone into several rounds of hiding, coupled with international press coverage and diplomatic appeals abroad, trying to buy time to reverse the decision. The children are black-listed by the courts from leaving Jordan, and international treaties prevent most nations from offering visas to them, as parties in an unresolved child custody case.

Leading authorities in the country contend the case has not been properly resolved because Qandah did not have access to competent lawyers. But according to some local sources, the problem goes deeper into Jordan's judiciary.

King Abdullah II and other members of the Jordanian royal family remain informed of Qandah's plight, pledging that she will not lose her children or be sent to jail. But 28 months after her Supreme Court ultimatum, an official solution has yet to be found.

Leisure

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Standing here at the edge of the world shows me how intense my emotions seem to be. This strong, silent place interrupts confusion...and just now I feel more at home with the landscape than with people.

- Joan Anderson

Theory and insight without action is useless.

- Joan Erickson

The silence is striking and unusual. I am wholly unprepared for this. I expected waves crashing upon the shoreline or the wind whistling over the dunes. Instead a sea gull is circling quietly overhead as if to guard the stillness of this elbow of sand.

I look up from where the skipper of the boat dropped us off and notice the incline of the beach obscures the bay on the left and the sea on the right. This may explain the lack of sound coming from both bodies of water hugging the shore. I walk towards the top of the hill where the sand seems to touch the sky. There I get a glimpse of the four-mile beach walk we are invited to participate in.

The facilitator suggested we walk alone with our thoughts for company. I slip out of my shoes and feel my bare feet sink into the soothing, warm, white sand. I am beginning to feel less burdened and can think of no better place in all of God's creation to reflect upon my life than in this natural world of sand, sea and sky.

Retreat from routine

Last month I wrote "life is difficult" and "change is difficult" while enroute to a retreat on the other side of the country. I also



wrote I was not in a good frame of mind when I left home because it was not a good time to leave. At the same time I acknowledged being troubled since the fall but also recognized real change takes a lot of effort and is harder than we think.

The retreat focused on "Rest, Repair and Renewal" in terms of life transitions. That is why I registered. A transition is a natural personal development process we go through in which we let go of an old situation and launch into a new one. It is an in-between time of struggling with old thoughts and behaviors and trying out new ones.

Our transition came suddenly two years ago when my spouse was advised to retire from a profession he was involved in for over thirty years due to a degenerative eye disease. I don't quite remember what

I felt at that time. What I do remember is the change threw the rhythms of our marital and family as well as in my professional life out of balance....

Understanding transition and change

Gone were the quiet solitary mornings, which I had just begun to cherish after finally reaching the "empty nest" stage. Gone was the daily routine I developed in the last few years without questioning its rhyme or reason. Gone was the feeling of being the chief executive officer of the household! And gone was the contentment I felt in having time to be involved in my own profession. And so we had to challenge ourselves to adjust and readjust when necessary.

In many ways the retirement was good for my spouse. He felt confident he gave as much as he could throughout the thirty years he had been working. Now he could look forward to having more free time and develop other interest. I, on the other hand, was just be-

ginning to enjoy spending more time at my profession after raising our children.

Checking with myself

The first six months of the retirement went well. Both of us did our own thing. The last six months of the first year was more difficult. We began to have different expectations of each other as we continued to carry on with our many responsibilities in regards to family and community life. During this time my professional life also became more demanding.

During the retreat I read the many notes I wrote myself in regards to how I began feeling last fall. There is no doubt I felt irritable at times and had a hard time focusing. I also felt impatient and had little tolerance for frustration. I diagnosed myself as being "scattered." Still, I was not ready to make a major change in the fall.

Choosing to act

The common cause of being "scattered" is having too many responsibilities and not enough time to do them well, leaving one open to further irritability and frustrations. While I was not convinced I had more responsibilities than the average individual at my age I did begin to realize something had to give. Consequently, I decided to take an extended sabbatical to spend more time with my spouse and family.

For many of us our lives have

become so filled with activity we have forgotten what it is like to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). And so, we sometimes need a break from routine to let go of old patterns of behavior and reassemble ourselves with his help. Attending the retreat allowed me to gain a perspective at a distance. The theme of "rest, repair and renewal," while in transition, allowed me to reflect honestly on the process I had gone through and gave me confidence in my decision.

At this time, some of you will be asking what all this has to do with my clippings of M.Scott Peck as mentioned in last month's column. I tucked it into my folder to remind me how easy it is to theorize about human behavior. In reality, to actually *act* in accordance with the theories is a challenge in itself. Even King Solomon with his extra measure of wisdom had trouble choosing the road less traveled. So, in all humbleness I hope by giving you a glimpse of my struggle and eventual resolution will help you move forward to "get unstuck" if that is what you need.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.



Exercise restraint with summer activities

Lisa M. Petsche

"I'm gonna soak up the sun, gonna tell everyone to lighten up."

- recording artist Sheryl Crow

From a kid's perspective, the current break from school is a temporary release from confinement, freeing him or her from the constraints of schedules and learning plans - and of course homework. The summer ahead is full of possibilities for enjoyment and adventure.

Meanwhile, parental reaction to this hiatus varies, ranging from relief (no lunches to make, homework to supervise, permission forms to complete, trips to chaperone or funds to raise) and perhaps anticipation (of spending more time with the kids) to anxiety (wondering how to occupy offspring and, in many cases, how to ensure adequate su-

pervision during the day).

While ideally summer is a time of living lighter, slowing down and getting away from it all, for some families it doesn't bring a change of pace, but merely an exchange of one busy schedule for another. Classroom time is replaced with various types of day camps or lessons, combined with evening and weekend sports team practices and games. This necessitates considerable coordination and lots of chauffeuring, each parent often heading in a different direction with one (or more) of the kids.

Why don't more families slow down?

Our achievement-oriented culture exerts tremendous pressure on today's parents to produce well-rounded kids - accomplished in aca-

demics, sports and the arts - who have an edge over peers. To this end, we're expected to micromanage our children's lives with productive, enriching activities. That pressure increases during the summer, when school-age kids have more time on their hands. Witness the increasing popularity, for example, of academic programs aimed not at helping weak students "catch up," but helping average and better students "get ahead." Summer break is not necessarily a carefree time anymore.

Yet unstructured time is actually beneficial for kids, allowing them needed opportunities to create, dream, reflect, relax and spend quality time with family and friends. (Adults also need this, but many of us don't make it a priority for ourselves, either.)

When my sisters and I were growing up, summers were quite informal, each weekday a blank slate. Those seemingly endless days were easily filled with activities such as reading, trips to the library and public pool, informal baseball and soccer games, cycling, roller skating, hopscotch, skipping, badminton, playing in our yard on the swings, in the sandbox or in the sprinkler, practicing gymnastics skills, collecting rocks, studying insects, going to the park to toss a ball or throw a Frisbee, trekking to nearby Red Hill Valley to explore the woods and creek, playing tag and hide and seek, building forts, playing card and board games, doing crafts and holding backyard carnivals. There were day trips on weekends, plus cottage rental for a week or two. The latter

was the only endeavour that required advance planning.

My husband's family, meanwhile, owned a lakefront cottage where he spent most of the summer, so school break for him was also carefree. Like me, he doesn't recall being bored or feeling he was missing opportunities.

Our own kids currently have an at-home parent, which enables them to sleep in on summer weekdays and do things like visit Grandma more often, make frequent trips to the library, read in the shade and spend hours in our wading pool. Their only daytime programming consists of one or two sessions of swimming lessons at a nearby pool, involving an hour a day for a two-week block. This counter-balances busy weekday evenings filled with soccer

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Writing

Two writers on the need for faith: Joyce Carol Oates and Flannery O'Connor

Marian Van Til

Every other year, hundreds of writers and would-be writers gather at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a faith and writing festival. They come from all corners of North America, and with each festival they come in ever greater numbers: this year there were 1700 registrants and 108 presenters. In keeping with the Calvinist penchant for order and the talent for achieving it, the festival is always beautifully, impeccably organized by the Calvin College English Department, aided by the college's efficient facilities. With that large number of participants such efficiency is a blessing.

That number of participants also makes for a wide variety of approaches to "faith and writing." While one might naturally assume that the faith referred to in any festival held under Calvin's auspices is *Christian* faith, that is not necessarily or entirely so. Some of the writers featured grew up in Christian homes but have not themselves embraced the faith, or have actively shunned it. A small minority of Jewish writers and publishers are also invited to present their thought and wares at each festival, and sometimes those Jewish writers have been high profile indeed: the now deceased novelist Chaim Potok, for instance, and Holocaust survivor and human rights advocate Eli Wiesel.

Nor is there unanimity of viewpoint or even general world-view among the Christian writers who are asked to be presenters. There, too, the festival has attracted writers of considerable repute, one of the most famous of whom in the secular world is John Updike (Festival 1998). Joyce Carol Oates might be called this year's equivalent to John Updike. Oates is author of 70 books, a professor at Princeton University and a native of Lockport, New York, 15 miles from where I'm writing this.

Oates gave an address, open to the public, as part of Calvin's Wiersma Memorial



Joyce Carol Oates

Lecture 2004. (The series is named for the late Calvin English professor Stanley Wiersma, who wrote poetry under the pen name Sietze Buning.) She began by saying, "I've never participated in anything remotely like this." Those turned out to be ironic words — of which she was unaware — and therein lay the problem.

Promisingly, she asserted, "I'm dealing with faith all the time." Then she added, "But it doesn't exist critically. It's embedded in our souls." Faith is an attempt to "see the meaning, drama and conflict" in our everyday world. But faith is "not iron-clad, that lasts a lifetime; it comes and goes, twists around." And it is, apparently, not Christ but *art* which holds the key to life's meaning: "I believe that art is the highest expression of the human spirit." And "art's highest task is to evoke sympathy for others, to bear witness for those who can't speak or are for some reason inarticulate, and to memorialize the world of our parents and grandparents, seeing its beauty, suffering, pain, redemption while honoring the complexity of human beings." So "writing about your own 'region' is a way to reach the universal."

To illustrate, Oates then described the plot of her book *We Were the Mulvaney's* (published in 1996, set in 1976). The main character, Marianne, is an evangelical Christian who is "forgiving, generous, naturally warm, not cruel or sarcastic." Nor does she become bitter when she has plenty of reason to. Yet from this reader's point of view, Marianne does not seem to bear that sweet fruit because of the Spirit of Christ. (Oates said the character is both a "type" and based on a Jewish friend of hers "who

married a non-Jew and her family disowned her." Yes, Marianne clings to her faith. But somehow she is just a "good person," in Oates' words. The message of the *We Were the Mulvaney's* is: "If people are genuinely good, they will be rewarded." So much for an understanding of the abysmal pervasiveness of sin, and the nature of true faith and Christ's profound rescue of us and our world.

In stark contrast, another author whose works festival goers had the opportunity to encounter, who espoused no such tottery thinking, was Roman Catholic short story writer Flannery O'Connor. O'Connor lived her whole life in the American deep South. In her fiction there aren't many "good people" by Oates' definition. O'Connor's radical faith worked itself out in dark, often violent stories not unknown to cause offense to some of her Christian readers. (Some of Oates' books have caused offense, but certainly not for their radical faith.) "That there can be no excessive love of God might well serve as the motto for O'Connor's life and work," says Dr. Ralph Wood, the O'Connor scholar from Baylor University who brought this enigmatic writer alive for festival goers. "The love of both God and neighbor — the second commandment always being inseparable from the first — is by necessity drastic, radical, immoderate."

"Her fiction is fierce and violent because it seeks to show what it is like for her characters, if only at the last minute, to love God absolutely. Her work also demonstrates what it is like to ignore or scorn God absolutely,

seeking substitutes in various Laodicean moderations. Total faith and total unbelief: these were for her the only alternatives"

O'Connor died of lupus in 1964 at the age of 39, having been given the time to write only 31 stories, two novels, some essays, speeches and letters. But fine writing and that "immoderate" faith (frequently misunderstood by critics) fuel the staying power of that small body of work. O'Connor is being read more now than at any time during her life or since her death.

Wood delves into O'Connor's radical love of God in his new book *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* (Eerdmans, 2004). He assesses her writing this way: "Her fiction is fierce and violent because it seeks to show what it is like for her characters, if only at the last minute, to love God absolutely. Her work also demonstrates what it is like to ignore or scorn God absolutely, seeking substitutes in various Laodicean moderations. Total faith and total unbelief: these were for her the only alternatives" (p. 30). Sounds rather "Reformed," doesn't it? Hasn't Reformed theology always stressed (too much so, in the view of some): "If you are not for God you are against him"? But let's simply call it *biblical* — which is why a Roman Catholic from Georgia, her fundamentalist and evangelical Christian neighbors, and Reformed Christians in Canada nearly a half-century later can ultimately have fellowship together in the same Savior. And why O'Connor's stories are as important as ever.

Ralph Wood is one of the few O'Connor scholar-critics who really understands O'Connor's worldview. That, O'Connor the Southern Roman Catholic, could use the fundamentalists of her place and time as the chief subject of her fiction, "offering them as a corrective to the smugness of Catholic ecclesialism and the blandness of Protestant liberalism," has continued to baffle critics. In fact, her portrayal of the fanaticism of these "retrograde" Christians was seen by early reviewers of her work as a satirical attack on fundamentalism, notes Wood. It wasn't. O'Connor admired the unapologetic Christianity of her fundamentalist neighbors, fanatical though some of it was, because it stood against the spirit of the age.

Wood told festival goers that O'Connor detected nihilism as the "new and deadly demon" of our age, "the gas we breathe" which, sadly, can be found in the church as well as outside of it. Yet she found the church, not "art," as that which will make "the world we are coming to endure." That's because, through Christ, it is the calling of the church, not art, "to restore humanity to its oneness."

O'Connor's fiction contains many penetrating biblical insights into the nature of faith, salvation and Christian life. Sometimes those insights go down like bitter medicine. But such medicine is powerful; it contains the Cure.



Flannery O'Connor

Summer activities

...continued from page 11

practices and games. (When my husband and I were both employed outside of home, though, and he faced a lengthy commute, we kept evenings free, in order to maintain our sanity.)

Most of us regard the warm, bright summer as an all too brief block of time. Naturally, it's tempting to try to cram in as much activity as possible. Resist the urge, though, and balance structured opportunities for your kids with down time. If mornings and afternoons are consumed with programming, keep evenings or weekends (better yet, both) free, and vice versa.

Here's wishing your family a low-stress summer that refreshes you — body, mind and soul.

Reflection/ Poem

Summer collage

Dividends

A single stem
knobby and gnarled
rises from rich earth
splits into shoots
which twist and twine
up along the fence
grow lush
and cascade down
a waterfall
of broad green leaves
and fragrant white flowers

Cloudburst

Wind whips
the pelting rain
as it plummets onto
the empty parking lot.

Wildly it streaks across
the pavement in waves
that froth and foam
as if on a lake.

Suddenly,
the rain stops,
the wind drops.

Puddles
tell what was.

The Storm

Thunder rumbles
and bumbles
while flashes of light
stab the night sky
— a jagged laser beam
flicked on,
then off again

Hope

Farther down the mountain
the deadwood has furrows
and shades of gray,
but up here it lies exposed,
scattered across the sparse green
like bones picked clean by scavengers,
starkly white,
smooth roots beseeching heaven.

All is still.

But wait . . .
Like rays of sunshine
cutting through cloud,
yellow flowers dot the scene,
little splashes of paint
that break the deathly quiet
to speak of life.

Dusk at the Cottage

A haunting call pierces the soothing
slap, slap of water against shore.
The loon bobs up and down, up and down,
tips, and slips under the surface.
Through folds of gray-blue cloud
a waning sun makes curtain calls
while a lone windsurfer struggles home.
Leaves whisper fleetingly.
Laughter and soothing murmurs
spill from the cabin while the
day's catch hisses on the grill.
Its aroma entices,
but already
my cup is full,
runs over.

Beatrice Vandervelde

God is a helper in time of distress

Pope John Paul II

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth give way
and the mountains fall
into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with
their surging.

Psalm 46:1-3

Psalm 46 is the first of six hymns to Zion contained in the Psalter (see Psalms 47;75;83;86;121). Psalm 46, as other similar compositions, celebrates the holy City of Jerusalem, "the city of God, the holy dwelling of the Most High" (v 4), but above all it expresses an unbreakable confidence in God, who "is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress" (v 2; see v 8, 12). The Psalm evokes the most terrible upheavals to affirm the force of the victorious intervention of God, who gives full security. Because of God's presence, Jerusalem "shall not be shaken; God will help it at break of day" (v 6).

We are reminded of the sayings of the prophet Zephaniah who addresses Jerusalem and says: "Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! / sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! ... The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; / He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, / He will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals" (Zephaniah 3:14,17-18).

Psalm 46 is divided in two great parts by a sort of antiphon, which resounds in verses 7 and 11: "The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob." The title "Lord of hosts" is typical of Jewish worship in the temple of Zion and, despite the martial aspect, linked to the ark of the covenant, makes reference to the lordship of God in the whole cosmos and in history.

This title is, therefore, source of confidence, because the whole world and all its affairs are under the supreme governance of the Lord. This Lord, therefore, is "with us," as the antiphon repeats, with an implicit reference to Emmanuel, "God-with-us" (see Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The first part of the hymn (see Psalm 46:2-7) is centred on the symbol of water and has a double contrasting meaning. On one hand, in fact, the tempestuous waters roar, which in biblical language are the symbol of devastation, chaos and evil. They make the structures of the human being and of the universe tremble, symbolized in the mountains, as the outpouring of a sort of destructive deluge (see v 3-4). On the other hand, however, we behold the refreshing waters of Zion, a city located on arid

mountains, but with "a river whose streams" make her glad. The Psalmist — though alluding to the springs of Jerusalem as that of Shiloah (see Isaiah 8:6-7) — sees in them a sign of the life that prospers in the Holy City, of its spiritual fecundity, of its regenerating force.

For this reason, despite the upheavals of history that make the people tremble and kingdoms totter (see Psalm 46:7), the faithful one finds in Zion the peace and the serenity deriving from communion with God.

The second part of the Psalm (v 8-10) thus sketches a transfigured world. The Lord himself from his throne in Zion intervenes with extreme vigor against the wars and establishes the peace for which all yearn. Verse 9 of our hymn, "Who stops wars to the ends of the earth, breaks the bow, splinters the spear, and burns the shields with fire," reminds us spontaneously of Isaiah.

The prophet also sang the end of the race of armaments and the transformation of warlike instruments of death into means for the development of peoples: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; / One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again" (Isaiah 2:4).

With this Psalm, Christian tradition has praised Christ "our peace" (see Ephesians 2:14) and our liberator from evil through his death and resurrection. Thought provoking is the Christological commentary made by St. Ambrose on verse 5, which describes the "help" the Lord will offer the city "right early." The famous Father of the Church sees in it a prophetic allusion to the Resurrection.

In fact, he explains, "the morning resurrection procures heavenly help for us. Having driven back the night, it has brought us to the day, as Scripture says: 'Awaken and rise, and come out from among the dead! And the light of Christ will shine for you.' Observe the mystical meaning. The passion of Christ took place in the evening ... His resurrection at dawn ... In the evening of the world he was killed, when the light is extinguished, as this world was lying in darkness and would have been immersed in the horror of even greater darkness, if Christ had not come down from heaven, light of eternity, to bring back the age of innocence to humankind. The Lord Jesus suffered, therefore, and with his Blood remitted our sins, the light of a more limpid conscience shone and the day was illuminated with a spiritual grace" ("Commento a Dodici Salmi" [Commentary on Twelve Psalms], Saemo, VIII, Milan-Rome, 1980, p. 213).

[This is a translation by ZENIT of the address John Paul II gave at a general audience June 16, 2004, commenting on Psalm 46]



Arts

Singing in the choir

All Nature Sings by J. Robert Jacobson, Franciscan Press, Quincy, Ill. 2002. 567 pp.

Reviewed by Vern Gleddie

The book, *All Nature Sings*, is an absorbing 365 meditations on 52 selected parts of creation such as light, sea, clouds, flowers, livestock, herding, procreation, Sabbath rest, the incarnation and so on.

Each week's selected "creature" is dealt with Monday through Sunday as Act of Creation, The Creature Itself, Goodness of the Creature, The Creature as Sacrament, The Fall and the Creature, The Cross and the Creature, The Creature and Worship, The Creature and the New Creation.

For example, in the week when the subject is "valleys" the progression is: the "why" of valleys is as important as how they came to be, valleys are a source of plenty, valleys are where the people are, valleys are where ministry happens, valleys are choked with development— "Californication!" Jesus walks us through the dark valleys of life, verdant valleys managed by good stewards sing for joy.

The scriptures used are of the author's own translation. He admits to taking liberty with the occasional text and therefore encourages comparison with standard translations. Jacobson explains his "liberty" within the context of the difficulty of translating Hebrew, a concrete language, into the much more abstract English. He has notably produced a down to earth text.

All Nature Sings is faithful to Scripture. It is also awash in Scripture. The Bible and the book of creation are both well represented.

The author's expressed intent is to focus mainly on the "self-evident metaphors" from the natural world, asserting that "nothing can serve as metaphor to make something else more understandable unless it has a meaning of its own that is clear even without explanation." He gives as example Psalm One's metaphor of the "well-watered tree" used to describe "something true" about the righteous "because we already know something true about such trees." He asserts that in the book he chooses to celebrate trees. Jacobson does more than that, producing by the end of each week an integration of the work of creation and the work of redemption.

The Rev. Bob Jacobson is a biblical scholar, pastor, former

Lutheran bishop and language expert with strong interest in the natural world, music and poetry. How wonderful to discover him putting it all together in one work.

In person Bob comes across as gentle, reverent, and self-effacing yet strong in conviction and straight-forward with the truth. His personage is stamped on the book.

City born and bred, the author attributes to his parents "a winsome synthesis of the gift of faith and the love of natural science." He studied in France and returned to the USA to complete his theological training. His facility in languages brought him to Western Canada where he would preach in as many as six different languages in various settlements of new European immigrants.

In retirement Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson reside on a quarter section of land near Bashaw, Alberta, where they do without public utilities. Bob practices what he preaches.

About the time the book was being completed the Jacobsons were received into the Roman Catholic Church. There is minimal sectarian reference in the book. A hallmark of the book is the author's vibrant faith.

All Nature Sings is an excellent contribution to the family of God. It is therefore with some trepidation that I suggest sometimes Jacobson, in his enthusiasm for the possibility of living closer to Eden, seems to lose some awareness that we labor in a vale of tears.

Those who make their living among actual thorns, thistles, disease and predators don't have the time and luxury of knowing each of their farm animals. In an occupation where one has little control over either costs or returns scrambling out a living does not allow either for trusting predators to take only the weak and sick when the fat first-born is also readily available. Granted, modern farmers often tend to be compromised also by a desire for the comforts of a western life-style. But Christian farmers do agonize over the possibility of taking unnecessarily and irretrievably from creation.

All told, however, *All Nature Sings* is highly recommended as an edifying, stimulating unique treatise on the importance the Creator attaches to what he has made. The book ought to be savored, as recommended, through a whole year and indeed will be serviceable over and over again.

Rain and Parades

For days seagulls wheel and call
in cloudless bright skies.

Finally the anticipated rain moves in
relieving field and farmer.

Drought-stressed grass colors and stretches.
Tree branches sigh and shimmer.

Released into greening pastures,
lambs skip and calves race
while all nature sings.

Re-appearing sun rays search
a scrubbed landscape
rinsed by tons of water,
spilling over into potholes.

Feathers are freshened in puddles.
Children wallow in pig sty delight.
Play winds up to abandon.
Laughter turns raucous.

Grandma empties boots,
washes clothes,
rinses children.

The mud puddle cycle begins again outside
Before the washer cycle is complete inside.

Grandpa surprises two repeat revellers;
one little pig squealing
at the planting of the other.

Hedges rattle as Grandpa sprints through,
running for effect

first to one puddle plover,
then the other,
swift justice stings wet behinds.
Wailing is silenced by "No crying!",
as scallawags drip off to Grandma again.

Pyjammed and subdued
apologetic puddle jumpers
approach Grandpa.
Gnarled hands enfold small soft hands:
some contrition,
some learning,
some hope.
"Puddle-popping is fine, boys,
but not with clothes on."

Suppertime is charmed.
Conversation is polite.
Plates are emptied unbidden.
We are friends.

What are the limits?
What are the lessons?
Rain is not always in season.
Not all parades are planned.
Boundaries remain fuzzy.

Grandpa might rejoice with more abandon.
Children might learn more respect.

Should Grandpa have rained on the little boys'
parade?
A walk together later, elicited some advice:

"Don't sit in the puddle, Grandpa."

Vern Gleddie



Prayer

The Lord's Prayer—*Our Father in Heaven*

Not singular but plural



Written by J.H. Sillevs-Smith
Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

The first word of the Lord's Prayer not only surprises us, but it also defines us. If it were up to me the 'best' prayers would be done in the first person singular, and 'my' not 'our' would be the operative word. Jesus, however, teaches us that prayer has to be in the plural.

For us the essence of prayer is personal petition privately expressed. We can't easily bring others into it. It is such an intimate activity that some of us feel very awkward when an acquaintance catches us in the act of praying. Many people consider a prayer that is not personal and private to be less sincere or powerful.

Jesus, however, places prayer in our midst with the word 'our.' From the very first word we are lifted above individual selfhood. Intimacy is good, but it can so easily become individualistic and exclusive. The secret of true prayer is that it releases me from my own 'self' and lifts me up. It breaks through the egotism that is in my heart and places me above it.

Note how very self-serving we usually are in our prayers. We pray for *my* health and *my* sins, *my* worries and *my* troubles, *my* sorrow and *my* weaknesses. And our prayers becomes wish lists for more and still more.

Jesus cuts through this vicious circle of our egotism and it's companion, loneliness, with the very first word of the Lord's Prayer. The opening words, *Our Father*, bridge the gap to our neighbors and to God. Especially in prayer, a person is never alone, doesn't need to be alone and, indeed, should never be alone. I am never just an individual. I am always a part of a whole, a member of *one* body by belonging to a community of faith.

In our heart of hearts we are incurable misers and spiritual skinflints. First and foremost, we look after number one. Do you know what keeps many unchurched people from joining the church? It is because so many believers act as if they have God in their pocket. As if they owned him. But no person nor group can claim ownership of God. He is not just *my* God, nor is he just *your* God. He is *our* God. He is also *our* Father, and therefore we are his children, and so brothers and sisters together. God is not in the East nor in the West.

He is everywhere, God of all.

The history of the church, throughout the ages, has shown again and again that Christians have a tendency to claim God only for themselves. But God cannot be claimed. It is he who claims *us*, all of us. God and religion are not private issues. God not only loves you or me but "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" for this whole world.

We sometimes think that spiritual individualism makes us rich and strong, but that is incorrect. People cannot live without God, nor can they live without each other.

If we speak the word 'our' honestly and with conviction, we receive heretofore unknown spiritual wealth. There is nothing worse than to be totally alone, but we are never completely alone. Some might be under the impression that they are worse off than others, or that no one could possibly know their loneliness and pain, or that no one else has committed such wicked deeds.

With this one little word 'our,' Jesus teaches us that we are never alone. There are many people like us who are in the same boat. There are no questions that have not been asked by others, nor is there guilt that has not been shared by someone else. There are no dangers that others have not experienced.

We cannot say the word 'Father' unless the word 'our' is experienced as enriching and wholesome. Our relationship with the Holy One may be considered as non-existent unless we experience the community of the saints. The two are inseparably connected.

God is the unknown and the unnameable. Yet, we may name him, because he has given us the name which we may use to approach him

Once we find God, we also find the children of God. Saying 'Father' implies having family.

Thus, these two words not only open up a beautiful vision of Heaven, they also present us with a wonderful view of earth. The vertical relationship with God leads to the horizontal communion with the saints.

We suggested at the outset that we would look at the Lord's Prayer one word at a time, and see if we can agree with it. So I ask you now, "Does the word 'our' flow

naturally from your heart? Do you have such a vital link with your neighbors?" Do you recognize that, if you want to confess that God is your Father, all people are his children? *Can* you pray that? Do you want to pray that?

When Jesus speaks to his disciples about their 'inner room,' he states that they must close the door behind them. I think in saying this Jesus expresses a double intent. In the first place he wants to assure us that we need to be with God quietly and undisturbed. But he also warns us against any kind of phoney display of religion and righteousness. If you know yourself well, you will not doubt the validity of this observation. Have you ever noticed how consistently we try to make ourselves look better or how we try to act smarter than we are in order to seem more important? Standing on the corners of the street and bragging about personal piety did not die out with the hypocrites of Jesus' day (Matt.6:5). That's why Jesus instructs us to go into our 'inner room' and lock the door.

That does not mean that we lock others out. Quite the opposite. I enter my 'inner room' alone, but I must intercede for my neighbor while I'm there. You cannot lock anyone out of your heart. The meaning of the word 'our' is all-encompassing. When I refuse to associate with someone, can I still expect God to associate with me? When I cut someone off from my fellowship, I will probably search in vain for fellowship with God. God and his people, the Father and his children, are inseparable. If I reject God's children, I will not find the Father either. If I break community with the saints I will also lose community with God.

God refuses to live in a heart that rejects even one of his children. He gave his Son to save this sinful world; where then do we find the audacity to reject anyone on earth for whom Christ came to die?

I have already discussed how, for some people, prayer seems empty and does not help them grow spiritually. Their experience of prayer is disappointing because they fail to find fellowship with God. They do not find their prayers answered. To them, God is nowhere to be found. If that is your experience you may want to check whether perhaps that word 'our' of the Lord's Prayer is the obstacle.

Now ask yourself our two questions, *Can* I pray this word

Prayer

'our' honestly and without exceptions? And, do I want to pray this word, again, without exception? It makes no difference who or where this exception may be. It could be a member of your household or someone living in Timbuktu. It does not matter what this person has done to you, nor does it make a difference what he believes or to which god he prays. If there is any one person that we hate or whom we have banned from the love in our heart, then our prayer will fade and die before it has a chance to go up. Then the smoke of our offering will slant down. God will not let himself be found unless we have subjected ourselves to his will, which seeks to find all humanity.

Once we learn to say the word 'our' without reservation, we can go on and say, 'Father.' If we take issue with the word 'our,' we get stranded on the road of prayer. Then we can't reach the wonderful richness which is contained in the word 'Father.'

When we want to talk about or to God, we must never forget the immense distance that exists between God and us.

God is God and we are human. He is eternal and we are temporal. He is the Exalted One and we are very insignificant.

If it were not for the fact that we are made in God's image and are created to respond to him, it would be completely preposterous to think or talk about him at all. He is the one who revealed himself and reached down to us. Even so, there is still an unsurmountable abyss between him who lives in heaven and us here on earth. He is distinct from us. Someone in the Old Testament once asked God his name. But the answer he got was, "Why do you ask my name? It is Wonderful" (Judges 13:17).

I know nothing innately about God. How could I possibly? The scope of our knowledge is very limited. What is dust, or spirit, or life? What is death, or love, or truth? All these concepts are more or less part of our human experience. But when I try to reach up to the Eternal One who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:15), how could I possibly answer the question as to who God is? I could not even come up with the question unless God himself moved me to ask it and urged my soul to

search for it.

God is the unknown and the unnameable. Yet, we may name him, because he has given us the name which we may use to approach him.

Even then, we must remember that it is more likely that a thimble could contain the water of all the oceans than that we could come up with a name that would exhaust the fulness and grandeur of the Name of God.

So, only God himself can say who he is. However, we now have an Advocate who gave us a window into heaven where God dwells. His name is Jesus and he told us that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father (John 14:9). He is the One who was able to ascend to heaven because he descended from there (Eph. 4:10). He is the one who knows us inside and out. He knows good and evil and he truly knows what truth and love is. He knows both us and God intimately.

It is this Jesus who taught us, "This, then, is how you should pray: *Our Father...*"

What a wonderful name! The name above all names. People who know the Bible know that God has many names. We could easily fill a whole page in this book with all the names of God. In some way we might say that all the hundreds of pages of the Bible are in reality nothing else but God revealing himself to us, God telling us his name. But the crown of all the names and the name that says it best is the one that Jesus taught us: "Say, *'Our Father...'*"

A microchip can store a photograph of the whole night sky. One tiny chip contains the image of the visible universe. That image is not the universe, yet the image of the universe is contained in that one little microchip. It is a true picture, and it is the same as the reality it represents. The same is also true of the name 'Father'; that name says it all.

When you say, 'Father,' you imply love, care, discipline, nurture and wisdom.

Parents who love their children will have an edge in understanding and experiencing the relationship God has with us. Yet there is a big gap between God's fatherly care and our parental care. For our feeble attempts to be good parents are merely a shadow of God's perfect care for us.

Take some time right now and let your thoughts explore the word *Father*, and try to imagine the

depth of its meaning.

When you say 'Father' you speak of the one who gave you life. The very origin of your existence comes from him. Saying 'Father' also suggests 'child'. I am his child. I am made in his image. I am his. My existence is from him and through him (1 Cor. 8:6).

When you say 'Father' you imply love. Again this requires us to pause and meditate for a while. This awesome eternal God loves me as his own child and carefully nurtures me.

A father cares. His mighty, yet loving hand will lead me and give me all that I need. When we read in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you," then the word 'care' has two meanings. It means that he thinks highly of me and loves me, but it also means that he provides for all my needs.

Without obedience, and with no intention to be obedient, our prayer would be repugnant, an attempt to seduce God into complying with our will

A good father disciplines when needed. He doesn't do that for his enjoyment but because it is necessary. We, by our actions, cause the need for correction. Just as a gardener prunes his trees, so God restrains us. Pruning is necessary in order to curtail the inclination to sprout wild growth which does not bear fruit.

A good father nurtures. He speaks with his children, tells them all kinds of things, prepares them for life, provides leadership for the formation of the mind and will and emotions. A good parent will draw out all the best that is in a child in order to prepare him or her for life. He watches carefully to prevent any warped development or wild growth.

Our heavenly Father watches over us in the same way, and blessed are those who do not think they can decide or take responsibility for their own development, but who would rather accept the leading of their heavenly Father in their lives.

"You, O Lord, are our Father." Whoever thinks about this for a while can honestly ask, "Do I really need to worry about anything at all?"

If we reflect consciously on the fact that we are really God's children, we may confidently ask our-

selves, "Do I really have any reason to be down on myself, to harbor an inferiority complex?" Several times I have been on the mountaintop of a tropical island watching the sun come up. This was always a spectacular display of colour and light. The whole dark earth turned into a glorious display of depth and color and beauty – as if new life was being born. In the same way, the name 'Father' rises over us like a sun which absorbs all shadows, which dispels all darkness, and devours all fear. All those who truly believe that God is their Father stand in the powerful light of complete happiness.

There is one more thing that I have not yet mentioned, but which should not be forgotten. I would like to illustrate this with the parable of the Prodigal Son. This young man stamped on his father's heart while wasting his inheritance in lewd living. When approaching his father's house he starts dragging his feet, but before he has a chance to get closer his father runs to meet him and greets him tenderly. True fatherly love never hesitates.

When we say 'Father,' we say forgiveness. Here we see most clearly the difference between our incomplete and tainted love and the Father's perfect love. Our love has little patience with imperfection and is so easily eroded. Our love tends to die the moment we meet unfair treatment or face evil intent. But God's love triumphs over all. God forgives. He does so gladly and quickly and always.

The other side of the coin is that the child, who can expect so much from the Father, has an obligation towards the Father. Thus, when we say 'Father,' we pledge our trust and love, coupled with obedience.

The word 'faith' can be used to express both love and trust. Obedience is the submission of our own will, cravings and lustful appetites to a will and law superior to ours. The Father-child relationship requires these two things from our side: faith and obedience which are inseparable.

Faith and obedience are the two pillars forming the foundation of prayer. Without faith our prayer is just so much nonsense, a mere formality, a grim spectacle.

Without obedience, and with no intention to be obedient, our prayer would be repugnant, an attempt to seduce God into complying with our will. It would be a lie.

However, when the name *Father* takes root in my heart and begins to show growth, then faith and obedience will blossom naturally. Just as the sun dispels the night so will the name Father remove all arrogance, stubbornness and rebellion. It leaves only one way, God's way. After all he is our Father. He speaks and we listen. He leads and we follow.

'Our Father' means, "All that is yours is mine"; but it also means, "All that is mine is yours." In this name which is above all names, our worries, our cares and all our sins will be consumed as if by fire.

At first you may be reluctant and fearful to say these words. But as they become clearer and more meaningful in your life, you will come to see how strong and supportive these words can be.

Lord teach us to pray...

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.*

Thy kingdom come.

*Thy will be done, On earth as
it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily
bread.*

*And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who
trespass against us.*

*And lead us not into
temptation,*

But deliver us from evil.

*For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,
for ever and ever.*

Amen.

the Netherlands

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Story

Pulled in by Methuselah

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Standing on the massive rock, I dipped my pail into Grundy Lake and filled it with water for the sunfish I'd just caught. I turned to grab my fishing rod from Stephen.

Suddenly, he shrieked.

"What?" I exclaimed.

My fishing rod sailed through the air and landed in the water. It slowly drifted away.

Then I saw him. "Methuselah! You're still alive!" I shouted. I dove into the water.

"Come back," Stephen screamed. "He'll chomp off your toes!"

I swam after Methuselah, my captured fishing rod clamped in his powerful jaw. No way was Methuselah going to steal the present I just got for my tenth birthday, no matter how glad I was to see him.

I wasn't afraid to follow him at a distance because snapping turtles don't look for trouble. He'd let go of the fishing rod when he was ready to. I knew I wouldn't have to wait until the sun set or it thundered, like some folklore claimed.

Suddenly, Methuselah disappeared. I grabbed my rod.

I swam back wishing my cousin, Stephen, hadn't come along on our camping trip. Mom offered to take him while his parents packed up to move to another city. His parents weren't stupid. They said, "Great!" Mom said it would be a waste of Stephen's childhood if he stayed at home while they packed. She knew he'd sit in front of the television set and eat potato chips. But I thought it was a waste of my childhood to have the kid along.

Two things really bugged me about Stephen. When he got close to the great outdoors, it was obvious he wished he was in the great indoors. He was content to slowly plod through life. And Stephen never stuck his neck out if he didn't want to or have to. My Mom sometimes said, "If you don't stick your neck out, you won't make any progress." If she was right, Stephen was going nowhere.

I tried to climb out of the water onto the gigantic rock. Twice I slithered backwards because of slippery algae coating it. I lay on my belly and pulled myself up, scraping my chest.

Stephen looked worried.

"You let go of the rod!" I accused him.

"I thought he'd pull me in." Stephen cringed.

"Methuselah couldn't do that."

"Methuselah?"

"The snapping turtle," I explained.

"We've seen him every year we've camped here. Last year he ate a sunfish

right off my line. The park ranger says he's probably around thirty-five years old because his shell is so smooth. And because it's overgrown with algae. So, I named him Methuselah. You know, after that guy in the Bible who lived so long."

My anger at Stephen disappeared as I talked excitedly about Methuselah.

But Stephen wasn't interested. He looked at his watch.

"What time is it?" I asked, suddenly remembering that Mom had told us to be back at the campsite by five for supper.

"Quarter to five."

"Let's go," I said. I gathered up my fishing gear. We walked across the top of the rock and over a bridge, which led us to the path through the forest back to our campsite.

Stephen wiped sweat from his forehead. "I wish I was in an air conditioned cottage right now," he whined.

I ignored him. Stephen's idea of roughing it was ten days in a cottage with a television and seven cases of pop.

A knobby kneed man hiked toward us. He held a thick branch in his hand.

"Hi, boys," he said. "Got your sticks ready?"

"Why?" I asked.

"Massasauga rattler," he said.

Stephen made a noise in his throat, like he'd swallowed a hard, lumpy candy.

I waved my fishing rod and said, "I'll fight him off with this."

The man chuckled and strolled away.

I walked on. Then I heard wood snapping, and looked back. Stephen brandished a dead birch branch like a sword. His eyes darted from side to side.

Right then I made a decision to not tell Stephen what I heard about massasauga rattlers from a park ranger last year. Why

should I tell him that massasauga rattlers are mild-tempered, have a small quantity of venom, and have such short fangs that they often don't properly deliver their venom? Why should I let him know that the rangers say massasauga rattlers were never sighted in this park, only in the provincial park across the highway?

Suddenly Stephen ran past me. "Hurry!" he urged. I ran behind him because Mom told us to stick together. He sprinted all the way to our campsite.

Stephen's stick stayed by his side as we roasted hot dogs for supper. Later, he got money from his suitcase and biked off, the stick resting on the handlebars of his bike. I thought he'd gone off to buy a pop at a vending machine,

and was glad to be rid of him for awhile. When he returned, his eyes were red.

"Where have you been?" Dad asked him.

"I phoned home," he said.

Later, when we crawled into our pup tent, Stephen placed the stick by his sleeping bag. We slept cramped together.

Hours later, something clutched my neck. I gasped for breath. Stephen clung to me like a leech. I shoved him away, then noticed he was still asleep. He whimpered, "Snake... ahhhh..." and other jumbled words. Finally, he stopped moaning.

I lay there for a long time thinking about what was happening inside of him, beneath his shell.

The next morning Stephen looked as pale as oatmeal. He ate silently. After breakfast, Dad asked Stephen and me to get the morning paper at the park entrance.

"I don't want to," Stephen said. He sat in a lawn chair, his stick beside him. I was glad he didn't want to come with me.

On the way, I stopped at the rock to look for Methuselah. I got off my bike and watched the water. Waiting. Searching. Waiting some more.

And then he came, sticking his mighty neck out as he swam. He made steady progress as he wove through the water searching for food. I shivered with excitement. Always, when I saw Methuselah, I felt this way. His powerful jaw, his muscular neck, and his fierce eyes amazed me.

I heard voices. Two loud men and two boys fished farther away on the rock.

Suddenly, I remembered I had to get the newspaper for Dad. I pedaled to the newspaper box. Empty.

Then I noticed Stephen's bike by the telephone booth beside the newspaper box. Inside the booth, Stephen leaned against the

wall. He gripped the stick. Then he wiped his T-shirt sleeve across his face. A moment later, he hung up and stepped outside.

Stephen stared at me.

I gawked at him.

Just then the man we had passed on the trail the day before walked by us. "Hi, boys," he said. He noticed Stephen's stick. "So, you got one!"

Stephen made that noise in his throat again.

I knew what I had to do for Stephen. "There aren't any massasauga rattlers in this park," I said to the man. "There's a snake that looks like them. The park ranger told me."

"Are you sure?"

"You can ask," I said. The man went into the rangers' office and returned minutes later. "You're right," he said. "I guess I'll burn this."

Looking relieved, Stephen threw his stick into the woods beside the road.

"No newspapers left," I said. "Let's tell Dad." As we biked to the campsite, we passed the rock and heard laughing and shouting. Mean laughter. Jeering cheers.

We stopped. And then I saw it. One of the loud men had caught Methuselah by his tail.

"How did you catch him?" A woman yelled.

"Lured the stupid critter in with sunfish we had on our line," the man answered.

Methuselah strained his neck and head backwards.

I jumped off my bike and dashed toward the men. But someone passed me.

Stephen!

He catapulted toward them, his neck sticking out as he raced forward. In his hands he clenched a huge stone.

"No!" I screamed. "Don't!" Would Stephen throw the rock at the man's head, like some television hero?

The men and boys didn't see Stephen coming behind them. He lifted the stone above his head, hurling it into the water right by the man who held Methuselah's tail.

Splash!

Startled, the man slipped and let go of Methuselah. He tried to regain his balance, but plunged into the water.

The boys panicked, shrieking wildly, as if they thought Methuselah would snap off the man's fingers and toes.

One boy tried to pull the man out of the water, but he fell in, too.

"Let's get out of here," Stephen said. We scrambled on our bikes. Beside me, Stephen biked wildly. His neck stuck out as he leaned forward over his handlebars.

Like Methuselah, I thought as I watched him making progress down the road. Maybe it wouldn't be such a waste of my childhood having Stephen along on our vacation.



Life

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Late on a Saturday afternoon Jack and I headed home, after a long day spent emptying out my mother's apartment. I looked over my shoulder at her living room furniture in the trailer, and boxes upon boxes of household items jammed into the back of the truck. I fought back tears at the sight of her earthly belongings trailing along behind us, and thought sadly of her reluctantly adjusting to life in the nursing home.

Arriving home, we unloaded most of the stuff into our garage, to be dealt with on Monday. We barbecued hamburgers for supper and Jack offered to take me for an evening motorbike ride. I was only too happy to climb on back of the Suzuki and drive away for an hour or so.

On Sunday I avoided the garage for the most part. But Monday morning inevitably dawned, and it was time to face the monumental task at hand. My sister-in-law had boxed most of my mother's possessions without actually sorting them. She wanted me to be able to do that at home.



Where to begin? I decided to make three piles – throw aways, keepers, and yard sale items. But the garage was so full of stuff there was no room to make piles. It wasn't just my mother's things. I hadn't done any spring cleaning, so there was a year's worth of accumulated clutter from our family of five.

On top of that, we're currently in the revolving door stage of life. Our children come and go on a seasonal basis, according to their school/ work/ social schedules. Every time they come home, they bring stuff with them. I decided to shift some of my mother's stuff to the basement so I could deal with the stuff in the garage.

The problem with that plan was that the basement was also full of stuff. There was Stephanie's stuff from her days in college residence, my mother's stuff from when we moved her out of the house two years ago, and the usual family stuff, like Christmas decorations,

the pool table, washer and dryer, music equipment and all that stuff. So I did what any rational person would do. I took the dog for a walk.

While at the back of the farm, I entertained the notion to just keep walking. Anywhere. As long as it was away from all that stuff. Instead, I prayed that God would help me work through it. I came up with the idea to empty James' room of his remaining stuff. If I could pack his stuff into boxes and persuade him to take them to his new, large apartment, then I would have some room to stuff my mother's stuff into his closet.

Back at the house I looked at the garage, the basement and James' room, and all that stuff – lurking, looming, leering at me. I felt as if I couldn't breathe. And being a calm, clear-thinking individual, I promptly burst into tears.

Jack hates it when I cry. He feels he should fix something to stop the leak. I've made some progress convincing him that tears are more of a safety release valve than a defect in the system. Once the pressure has been relieved, the brain is better able to function normally again.

Through my tears I began to realize the mountains of stuff I had to deal with were only the tangible evidence of a deeper issue. The real source of my stress was a familiar enemy: change. Within the last three months I have watched my son graduate from college, get a job and really move away from home; my "baby" graduate from high school and make plans for college in the fall; my oldest daughter begin courses toward a Master's degree, while working full time and planning to move out in September; and my mother face major health issues and end up in a nursing home. My children are claiming their independence while my mother is losing hers. And I am in control of none of it.

I sat down on my mother's couch and began praying again. I thanked God that he's with us through all these changes, and it doesn't scare him at all. I asked him to help me see the blessings that abound so richly in each season of life, and I prayed for the strength and energy to deal with all that stuff. As always, he came through. I began humming an old Randy Stonehill tune, the chorus of which goes, "You either learn to bend with the wind, or it knocks you down."

Change and all that stuff

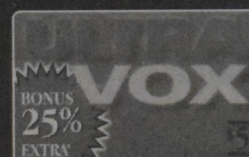
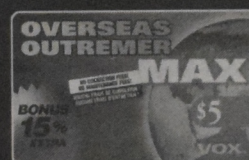
Today there's still stuff crammed into all areas of our house. The garage sale pile has taken on a life of its own and seems to expand with each passing day. Jess is sure she can finance her first semester with the proceeds it will bring. I'm hoping it's enough to cover textbooks.

Meanwhile, Stephanie has accumulated more furniture for when she moves out. And James came home last Saturday with a big smile on his face and a little white box from the jeweler. He proudly showed me a beautiful diamond ring he plans to present to his girlfriend this weekend.

Always more change, even if it is all good. I'm learning to keep my eyes on the Changeless One to help me go with the flow. Change is inevitable. When you think about it, it's the stuff of life.

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Opinion

Mainly on Money

Iraq? No longer prime news. Just another Middle East trouble spot, like Afghanistan, or Israel or Palestine. Basically of no consequence. Why? Because Iraq only has 10 percent of the world's oil reserves subject to constant sabotage, its oil infrastructure grossly neglected. Totally unreliable.

Now the spotlight, let me correct that, the beam is on Saudi Arabia with a quarter of the life blood of the globe, the purest of crude, in top shape mechanically. Is it politically more stable? No. The Royal House in Riyadh, capital of the Saudi kingdom, suppresses all women, even though many of them are well-educated and well-off. They are not allowed out unless accompanied by a man, and then only deeply veiled. Very few have a job, of course.

Just last year, with a fire at a girls' school, rescuers were kept from entering the blaze because the young women did not have their proper head covering, so they ignored their cries for help. In a world where equality of sexes is the basis of democracy, this spells eventual disaster.

Still, for better or worse, it's Saudi Arabia, the land of Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed, and of Medina, home to his tomb — Islam's two most holy cities — that is the anchor of our oil-oholic world. On this country our life-line depends, with a quarter of the world's known crude oil reserves.

How good is our bet? Westerners there already play a crucial role. Although they do not operate those perpetually nodding pumps, they still call the shots as managers. Where locals do the dirty work, technical jobs are performed by some 100,000 expatriates, mostly Brits and Americans, who also handle relations with foreign customers, legal matters, exploration, repairs to critical systems, expansion projects and other advanced details. These 'aliens' are deeply resented in the Saudi Kingdom because they can do publicly what Saudis can do only on penalty of death. They live in ghettos where the clock is advanced to European standards, where liquor flows freely, men and women openly intermingle, and the only religion is the dollar — the sole reason for their presence. No wonder attacks against these expatriates have accelerated rapidly, fueled by the increasingly popular brand of fundamentalism as advocated by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi himself.

You may remember that 15 of the 19 September 11 hi-jackers were from that country, a true image of the nation's mood, disenchanted with the rule in Riyadh, which is seen in league with the 'infidels.' If there is one region in the Middle East ready for regime-change, it's Saudi Arabia, and it will not be a peaceful transition: Saudi against Saudi, the cruelest of conflicts, civil war. Bin Laden sees the oil fields as part of the Islamic inheritance, to be used for the ben-

efit of his people and not to be used by the adherents of the 'American religion.' He sees Middle East oil as the birthright of all Muslims; destroying that birthright is not part of his agenda. That's why we haven't seen attacks on the oil assets, the Saudi gravity train and the source of more than 90 percent of Saudi Arabia's export revenues. Putting the wells out of commission would harm al-Qaeda's reputation locally. Also the network of fields, pipelines, refineries and ports are heavily guarded, unlike the compounds where the expatriates live and work, which are nearly always in populated areas, and much more easily attacked.

Saudi Arabia — irrational state

Killing and wounding or just threatening foreigners instead of harming the energy infrastructure has the advantage that it leaves the essential oil machinery, the ultimate economic weapon, in place. Targeting these people makes bin Laden and al-Qaeda even more popular with the Saudi population, as little love is lost between the foreigners and the locals, who have never made great efforts to integrate the Westerners or make them feel welcome or secure.

Saudi Arabia keeps on promising to produce. However, the exodus of the Americans and British will not only put a stop to bringing new fields on line, but will also result in a more rapid deterioration of existing fields. Result: prices will keep on rising in line with Saudi discontent. Why's that? Almost all Saudis get most of their income from government controlled oil revenue — not from jobs. The population has doubled in the past 24 years, but Saudi oil production has been steady since 1980, which translates into a 50 percent pay cut for all, feeding growing dissatisfaction and growing al-Qaeda support.

Turmoil there means disaster. As Robert Bear, a former Middle East expert with the US Central Intelligence Agency has written, "Saudi Arabia is more and more a breathtakingly irrational state. For a surprising number of Saudis, including some members of the Royal family, taking the kingdom's oil off the world market — even for years, and at the risk of destroying their own economy — is an acceptable alternative to the status quo."

Osama bin Laden knows this and also knows that high oil prices mean high inflation and high interest, something the US can ill afford. Osama bin Laden knows that high oil prices make the US even more dependent on foreign capital to finance its excessive private and public consumption and public and private debt. He knows that no country, so dependent on lending from abroad, can long endure. Nothing has helped Osama more than the Iraqi invasion. And then there is that relatively small volunteer army, already spread too thin thanks to actions in Afghanistan also. Does this mean that the 'dreaded draft' will be introduced after the November election?

Global oil war

Wars are always fought to gain an advantage. Hitler wanted "Lebensraum," which included the possession of the Russian oilfields. Japan, with no natural resources whatsoever, desired Indonesia's carbon treasures. The First Gulf war was all about oil as well, and so is the current conflict there. Now we have a new twist on a old theme: thanks to a world-wide threatening shortfall, the oil war has gone global. Everybody of any influence is jockeying for position to gain access to the last few billion barrels of this precious fluid.

A century ago Oscar Wilde wrote that "Human slavery is wrong, insecure and demoralizing. On mechanical slavery, the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends." When he wrote these words, the world used a mere 1,900 million metric tons of oil equivalent. Now it uses 38,000 million metric tons of oil, coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydropower. While in that same 100-year period our head count increased about four-fold, our energy use jumped 20 times as fast, giving the 'average' global citizen the use of 20 'energy slaves,' 20 human equivalents working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Many more for us, of course, hardly any for the 2 billion poor, existing on a dollar a day.

Even though humans are not directly enslaved, indirectly many of us suffer from respiratory diseases and cancers, by-products of mechanical slavery, in the process ensnaring nature, causing the deaths of species and endangering all of humanity through climate change. So even mechanical slavery is now proven 'wrong, insecure and demoralizing,' and is leading to global tensions everywhere.

Take China and Japan. They have been locked in a diplomatic battle over access to the big oil fields in Siberia for months now. Japan depends entirely on imported oil and is desperately lobbying Moscow for a 3,700 km pipeline from Siberia to coastal Japan. But China, now the world's second-largest oil user, after the United States, also wants the Russian oil, claiming it as vital for its own "energy security" and is pushing for a 2,200 km pipeline south to Daqing. So a bidding war is going on there. Japan has offered to finance the \$5 billion pipeline, invest \$7 billion in development of Siberian oil fields and throw in an additional \$2 billion for Russian "social projects." But China is now stronger militarily than Russia, is also a nuclear power and has a long border with Russia.

My bet is that China will win this contest due to its sheer size and large army, which could easily conquer that part of the world. China also has cozier up to Saudi Arabia, lobbying Riyadh for access to Saudi reserves and has thrown in offers of sophisticated Chinese weaponry, including ballistic missiles and other hardware, that the United States and Europe have refused to

sell to the Saudis. Saudi Arabia, secretly fearing a US invasion, might just make a deal with Beijing.

Energy security

In a world desperate for oil, "energy security" means far more than safeguarding refineries and pipelines against terrorist attack. Energy security means being able keep the global mechanical slaves functioning, having ready access to enough fuels and electricity at affordable prices to keep its economy running, its people fed and its borders defended. A failure of energy security means that modern life as we know it grinds to a halt.

So where is the world in this race for survival? New demand for electricity is outpacing the new supply of power and natural gas. In Brazil, India and especially China, energy demand is rising so fast it may double by 2020. Perhaps the 2 billion people who have no electricity at all will be the lucky ones, after all. We are in for interesting times.

Competition for oil will be waged by hook and crook, in the race to guarantee a piece of the last big reserves of oil and natural gas. That will be the dominant geopolitical theme of the 21st century. Just as China and Japan are scrapping over Siberia, so in the Caspian Sea region, European, Russian, Chinese and American governments and oil companies are battling for a stake in the big oil fields of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In Africa, the United States is building a network of military bases and diplomatic missions whose main goal is to protect American access to oilfields in volatile places such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and tiny Sao Tome — and, at the same time, to deny that access to China and other thirsty superpowers.

Of course, it's the Middle East, where most of the world's remaining oil lies, and where the Final Battle will take place. The authors of the Pentagon Climate Change Report have a telling line: "Every time there is a choice between starving and raiding, humans raid." The USA, aggressive by nature, could well induce a revolt in Saudi Arabia, and, with the excuse to protect its allies there, the Riyadh Royal House, will secure its oilfields and so extend its wasteful ways for a while. Forget about Health Care. Forget about Social Security. The real battle will be 'energy security' to keep our mechanical slaves gainfully employed.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielema



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Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray - CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCA	6:30 am	630
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410

Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound - CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Tilsonburg - CKOT	9:02 am	101.3
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920
Woodstock - CJFH	7:30 am	94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater - CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool - CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow - CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne - CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
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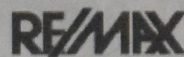
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Personals	Birthday	Anniversaries	
Christian widower (early 60's) in Alberta would like to meet someone. Likes walking, car traveling. Preferably, please call 780-476-6551 or respond to: Christian Courier File #2744 1 Hiscott St St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7	August 12, 1924 With thankfulness to the Lord, we invite you to celebrate with us the 80th Birthday of our husband, dad, grandpa, and great-grandpa Herb Groenewegen An Open House will be held at Ebenezer Villa 337 Stone Church E, Hamilton, on August 12 from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.	1964 August 13 2004 "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1 With joy and thanksgiving to our covenant God for his faithfulness and love, we celebrate the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents: JACOB AND ADA ZEKVELD (nee Hengeveld) May the LORD continue to bless you richly as you serve him in his kingdom and may he guide us as a family in the generations to come. With love from all your children and grandchildren: Tony & Arley-Ann Zekveld, Toronto, ON James, Deanna, Nathan, Kristin, Daniel Henry & Annette Zekveld, Bowmanville, ON (†)Leanne, Aria, Christiana, Nicholas, Hannah, Thomas Harry & Evelyn Zekveld, Strathroy, ON Jordan, Jonathan, Levi, Lyn, Jacob, Bethany Jeff & Dianne Friesen, Winnipeg, MB Aaron, Julia, Emily John & Maxine Zekveld, Wyoming, ON Philip, Jessica, Devyn, Edmund Richard & Nancy Zekveld, Winnipeg, MB Karen Zekveld & Brian Zegers (engaged) Bowmanville, ON Gary Zekveld, Wyoming, ON (See announcement below.)	
A woman in her mid 50's (dutch born, CRC background, divorced for 10 years) would like to meet a Christian man. Please respond to: Christian Courier File #2743 1 Hiscott St St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7	1954 July 23 2004 With thankfulness to God we joyfully announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of BOB AND GRACE VOORBERG We wish you God's continued blessing. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren: Hetty & Cor Verhage Mary Martens Ron & Hilda-Ann Voorberg Tracy, Christopher, Vanessa, Trevor An Open House will be held on Saturday, July 24, 2004 from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. at Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Rupke Road, Bradford, Ontario Home address: 2 South Canal Bank Rd RR #1 Kettleby ON L0G 1J0	1964 August 13 2004 With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents DIEMER AND ELISABETH (Bep) DEVRIES (nee Snaterse) "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." Psalm 84:11 Love and Congratulations from your children Alice and Christian Houel Frank and Joan Peter Randy and from your grandchildren Nathalie, Eric, Kelly, Patrick, Jenina, Caroline and Reuben. Home Address: 12 Lakeshore Road Beaconsfield, Quebec H9W 4H3	
New Address Address Change for: Jack & Alice Hielema (Formerly Prince George BC) 47 Hill Crescent Red Deer AB T4N 6G3	Thank You Thank You friends for joining our family celebrating God's faithfulness in the 50 years of our marriage covenant. Arie & Ellen Van Eek	1964 August 13 2004 With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord JACOB AND ADA ZEKVELD (nee Hengeveld) hope to celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary with their children and grandchildren on Saturday, August 14, 2004 Open House to be held from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. at Covenant Christian Church Wyoming ON London Line (Hwy 22) - 2 miles west of Reece's Corner. Best wishes only please. Home address: 4448 Michigan Line RR 1 Camlachie ON N0N 1E0	
Engagement  We, Ed and Tilda Bosman, happily announce the engagement of our son Steven Jeremy Bosman & Alyssa Jolene Feddes We give them our loving support as they prepare for a lifelong union.		1964 August 13 2004 With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord JACOB AND ADA ZEKVELD (nee Hengeveld) hope to celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary with their children and grandchildren on Saturday, August 14, 2004 Open House to be held from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. at Covenant Christian Church Wyoming ON London Line (Hwy 22) - 2 miles west of Reece's Corner. Best wishes only please. Home address: 4448 Michigan Line RR 1 Camlachie ON N0N 1E0	

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Obituaries		Rooms for rent	For Sale	
<p>RENS VISSER-ELGERSMA</p> <p>our special friend and sister-in-law, passed on to Glory, June 25, 2004 at the splendid age of 88.</p> <p>She was widowed two years prior by husband, Clarence.</p> <p>We miss her. Gertie and Jennie Visser Family: Gaelle & Cobi Shirley & Ken vd Laan Ron & Linda Jennifer & Randy Slump Clarence & Annette 11 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren Flamborough ON</p> <p>Surhuizum, Friesland - Grimsby, Ontario December 13, 1910 July 4, 2004</p> <p>On Sunday July 4, 2004, the Lord of life called home our Mem, Beppe and oer-Beppe</p> <p>TJITSKE DE HAAN nee van Schepen</p> <p>Widow of Lippe Catharinus de Haan since 1966 She loved to sing, and died in the assurance of the Resurrection.</p> <p>She leaves her children: Lippe & Ena de Haan, Exeter, ON Stien & Hans Nusselder, Kitchener, ON Trynie & George Mackowski, Owen Sound, ON Bonne & Trudy de Haan, Hamilton, ON Harold & Betty de Haan, Hamilton, ON Lien & Henk Hultink, Dunnville, ON 21 grandchildren & 31 great-grandchildren 296 Marlborough St, Exeter ON N0M 1S2</p> <p>Our Lord took to himself EVERT SIKKEMA on June 19, 2004.</p> <p>Devoted husband for 49 years to Klazina (Geerlinks). Loving father and grandfather to John & Amy Sikkema Shirl & Rick DeZoete Diane & Gerry DeGrier and 14 grandchildren. We are comforted by the knowledge that he is safe with Jesus.</p>	<p>NieuwAmsterdam, The Neth. Grimsby, ON May 17, 1905 June 25, 2004</p> <p>Ephesians 3:18 Boundless dimensions of Christ's love Gone to be with her LORD and SAVIOR Friday June 25, 2004 at Shalom Manor.</p> <p>HILDA GERRITSSEN</p> <p>Widow of Johan Albert since 1986 Dear Mother of Ria & John VanStaalduinen, Beamsville Jerry & Alice, Grimsby George & Grace, Lynden, Wash. USA Johan & Heather, SaltSpring Island, BC</p> <p>Service of celebration of Hilda's life took place June 28, 2004 at the funeral home. Rev. Van Weelden presiding. Glory be to GOD.</p> <p>Zevenhoven, The Neth. Iroquois, ON June 8, 1909 June 20, 2004</p> <p>MARTEN VERBURG</p> <p>"The Lord is good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5</p> <p>The Lord called his faithful servant home on Sunday, June 20th, 2004 at the age of 95.</p> <p>Dearly beloved husband of the late Klara Verburg (nee Tibben). Loving father of Joyce & Bert Bosman, Ottawa, ON Ann & Jerry Doppenberg, Yarrow, BC Lena & Joe Vandenakerboom, Rocky Mountain House, AB Nick & Jackie Verburg, Athens, ON Harma & Len Verbruggen, St. Catharines, ON Henry Verburg, Belleville, ON Jenny DeVries, Brampton, ON Wilma & Ben Bronsema, Bowmanville, ON Marten & Susan Verburg, Iroquois, ON Minnie Verburg, Bellville, ON Sadly missed by 33 grandchildren, 68 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren</p>	<p>Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?</p> <p>Kloosterburen, Groningen Kingston, Ontario Feb. 3, 1919 July 7, 2004</p> <p>DIRK HILBERDINK</p> <p>After a lengthy illness, Dad went peacefully to be with the Lord. We praise God that he could enjoy the trials and joys of life for over 85 years. Survived by his wife of 62 years: Jantina (nee Sibma) Loving father of: Dirk (Irene), Joe (Dallas), Jake (Diddy), Florence (Dirk) VanderMeer plus 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren Also survived by 5 sisters and 1 brother in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Correspondence address : J. Hilberdink 14 Greenview Drive #602 Kingston ON K7M 7T5</p> <p>Koekange, Drenthe - Brampton, Ontario May 22, 1913 June 12, 2004</p> <p>"I can lie down and sleep soundly because you, Lord, will keep me safe." Psalm 4:8</p> <p>THYS RUMPH</p> <p>Peacefully went to be with his Lord on Saturday, June 12, 2004 in his 92nd year. Beloved husband of the late Annigje (Drost) Rumph (1998) Loving father of: Hank & Grace Rumph, Drayton Pat & Bill Hessels, Alma Hilbert & Jannie Rumph, Holland Luke & Mia Rumph, Listowel Hilly & Bill Welmers, Greensville Helen & Menno van der Vinne, Georgetown Albert & Martha Rumph, Alma Anne & Larry Brouwer, Alma Foudly remembered by 37 grandchildren, 58 great-grandchildren Predeceased by two sisters, two brothers and two infant grandchildren.</p> <p>Rev. Peter Van Egmond conducted the Funeral Service in the Christian Reformed Church, Drayton, on Wednesday, June 15, 2004. Interment Drayton Cemetery. As expressions of sympathy, donations to the Back To God Hour would be appreciated by the family.</p>	<p>ROOMS FOR RENT at a private Christian home Sept. 2004 school term at the University of Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier. Call 519 746 6344.</p> <p>St. Catharines - Room to rent in shared house with other Christian young people. Close to Fairview Mall and on bus route. Call Anita at 905-684-5806.</p> <p>2 bedroom apt. West Hamilton Mtn, 5 min. to Redeemer. Avail. Sept. 1st, utils. & cable incl. \$700/mo, yr. lease, 1st & last. Call (905) 383-9864</p> <p>Needed: Room</p> <p>Room needed to rent. Young man going to Seneca College in September needs a room from Sunday nights to Thursdays. Please call 519-501-1093</p> <p>Vacation rental</p> <p>For rent by night or weekly. Cochrane, Northern Ontario. Cozy, comfortable cedar log cabin. 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, kitchen & living room. For more information, contact Ada Struyk at 705-272-6169 or email: cmstruyk@puc.net</p>	<p>SUMMER RETREAT at Lakewood Christian Campground, Camlachie ON 5 minute walk to Lake Huron. Very spacious 3 season 37' mobile home with 2 tipouts, 4 piece bath, Queen size bed, automatic washer. 10'x37' maintenance free deck with solid insulated roof. 8'x10' vinyl minibarn. Located by water with private dock for dining, canoeing and fishing. \$35,700.00 Ph: 519-245-4589</p> <p>Bed & Breakfast</p> <p>INGERSOLL ON Lil' Bit Country Guest Suite B&B</p> <p>An elegant air conditioned private entrance suite with 900 sq. ft. of personal space. Includes a private 3 pce. bath, personal kitchenette, queen size bed & cots, large entertainment room with gas fireplace. Join us for an evening visit or a served breakfast in our dining room at 8:30 a.m. Centrally located in SW Ontario near London. Ideal for tourists, travellers or vacationers in the area, easy access to main highways and numerous tourist attractions. Reduced rates for a Multi-Night stay. We look forward to greeting you!</p> <p>Nico & Alice Jukema, PH: 519-485-2101 Fax: 519-485-2103 email: jukema@lilbitcountry.ca web: www.lilbitcountry.ca</p>
<p>At the Willett Hospital, Paris, on Saturday, June 19, 2004, the Lord opened his arms and carried home his faithful disciple Reverend Gabe Rienks in his 90th year; loving husband and friend of Afina Rienks (nee Van Thiel) for the past 58 years. Father of Eugene (Grace) Rienks, Edmonton; Sjoukje (Max) Gunther, The Netherlands; Pier (Ada) Rienks, Whitehorse; Marti (Aris) Dreyer, Paris. Gabe Rienks is also survived by 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren and several brothers and sisters in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Reverend Rienks served the Christian Reformed churches in Pembroke and Simcoe and went on to serve the Presbyterian Church until his retirement in 1985.</p> <p>After he retired Gabe wrote many Christian articles and a book about his missionary brother.</p> <p>For Gabe, God was the beginning, the middle, and the end. Well done, oh good and faithful servant.</p>		<p>Visiting Angels INC. ®</p> <p>Home Health Care Respite care Palliative Bathing Shopping Housekeeping</p> <p>"Loving care when you can't be there."</p> <p>Call us 905-685-4242</p>		
<p>Reverend GABE RIENKS</p> 		<p>Happy Retirement!</p> <p>Jennie Berg has retired from teaching as of June 24, 2004. She has taught 38 years in Samia, Clinton, Chatham and finished the last number of years at St. Theresa's in Brantford. She is now looking forward to entering a new chapter of life. She would like to extend her sincere thanks for the support you have given her over the past number of years. Jennie will enjoy her retirement and hopes to see many of her colleagues and friends in the Paris Gospel Text Store in Paris. She's looking forward to assisting you with that special item.</p>		
<p>A charitable gift annuity offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">the peace of mind of a guaranteed lifetime income, largely tax freethe satisfaction of knowing that you will be providing a future gift for Redeemer University College <p>Rates of return for those over 65 range from 7% to 10%. Please contact us for your own confidential, no-obligation quote. Information available on other gift-planning options as well.</p> <p>Redeemer University College 777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4 905-648-2131 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca</p>		<p>REDEEMER University College</p> 		

Job Opportunities

FULL-TIME PASTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES.

First Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, Alberta, a dynamic, innovative church, ministering to about 750 people, is in search of a person who is both gifted for, and passionate about working with Youth and helping them grow into committed disciples of Jesus Christ. The qualified person must be an enthusiastic, organized, highly relational team player who is eager for the church to be relevant in our rapidly changing culture. We are already praying for you. Send all inquiries and resumes to:

Youth Pastor Search Team,
3818 14a St. SW, Calgary, AB T2T 3Y2
or email: michael.koot@shaw.ca

MARANATHA CRC

of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada,
a congregation of 480 members, is seeking an
ASSOCIATE/YOUTH PASTOR.

This individual would be an ordained minister, experienced with youth, willing to lead our church and community outreach church programs with hands-on involvement. For a detailed job description, or more information, contact Frank deWalle, Search Committee Chairman.
e-mail: adewalle@telusplanet.net.

FULL TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Immanuel CRC, Langley, B.C.

is seeking to hire a full time Youth Pastor who has a strong living relationship with Christ, an energetic and enthusiastic personality, and a passion for working with youth. Please send your resume to
Fran Schipper - efgv@hotmail.com

YOUTH DIRECTOR/HALF-TIME:

WANTED, a loyal servant, who is gifted in youth ministries and whose love for God and his people is present in his/her everyday walk. This self-motivated and enthusiastic person will use his/her gifts to direct, lead and motivate today's young people into tomorrow's leaders. This position at **ST. THOMAS FIRST CRC** will be available in July 2004. For further information, or to send your resumé, contact: **First CRC, PO Box 22039, 204 First Ave, St. Thomas ON N5R 6A1**
or email: firstcsrcstthomas@canada.com.



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Mr. Sid Tjeerdsma, Executive Director
by email at sidjt@tollendalevillage.ca or
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TEACHING POSITION OPEN

Centennial Christian School invites applications, for a definite opening for a Grade 4/5 combined class maternity leave position. The position will begin November 1, 2004. A position is also available for High School French.

Centennial Christian School is located in the beautiful Pacific Northwest area of British Columbia. Centennial Christian School is an inter-denominational school with a teaching staff of 20 and a support staff of 10, and presently offers Christian education to 230 students in Kindergarten - Grade 12. Please contact the principal or vice principal for further details and send letter of application, resume and other information to:

Centennial Christian School

Curtis Tuininga - Principal

Edgar Veldman - Vice Principal **Ph: (250) 635-6173**

3608 Sparks Street, **Fax: (250) 635-9385**

Terrace, B. C. V8G 2V6 **Email: ccs@telus.net**

ACCOUNTING FIRM

located in a rural community in the **Niagara Peninsula** is seeking an
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The position would involve client welcoming, preparation of Notice to Reader financial statements and personal taxes for owner-managed farming and non-farming businesses, general bookkeeping, and internal bookkeeping, including accounts payable and accounts receivable.

Ideal candidates are motivated by the excitement and challenge of working with owner-managed businesses, and will have a general knowledge of farming activities. Good computer skills are required, and knowledge with Microsoft products, Caseware, SIMPLY Accounting, and Business Vision is an asset.

We offer a competitive salary and an additional benefits package. If you feel that this is an excellent opportunity, please forward a cover letter and resume to:

Box 3000, c/o Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
or email: ads@christiancourier.ca
Subject: Box 3000

EMMANUEL HOME

Capital Campaign Coordinator Position

EMMANUEL HOME, a 95 unit Christian Assisted Living residence for seniors in Edmonton in the process of a building an expansion of 100 units, requires a Capital Campaign Fundraising Coordinator.

Responsibilities include: developing goals, preparing promotional materials, targeting corporate and private donations, organizing and training volunteers and making presentations to church and social groups.

Qualifications include: excellent understanding of the principles of fundraising, excellent organizational skills, ability to take initiative, strong communication and interpersonal skills, good understanding of financing concepts such as life leasing, and an understanding of the Reformed Christian supporting community.

This is a contract position. Length of time is flexible. Remuneration based on experience and qualifications. Job description available on request.

For information please contact:
Vicky Van Andel vanandel@emmanuelhome.ab.ca
or fax resume to 1-780-473-0970.



Christian Labour Association of Canada Benefit Administration Office

Due to the continued growth of CLAC's benefit plans, the Grimsby Benefit Administration Office is currently seeking a candidate for the following full-time position:

Benefit Plan Administrator

The successful candidate will be a highly motivated self-starter and possess a degree in business administration or the equivalent. In addition, this individual will have excellent communication skills, both oral and written, as well as strong interpersonal skills. Preference will be given to those knowledgeable in the areas of finances, insurance and pension benefits. Knowledge of Microsoft Office (especially Word and Excel) and DataEase computer programs would be a definite asset. We offer a competitive salary and benefit package.

Applications should be addressed to:

Peter Van Duyvenvoorde, General Manager
CLAC Benefit Administration Office
89 South Service Rd, PO Box 219
Grimsby ON L3M 4G3
Tel: (905) 945-1500
Fax: (905) 945-7200
pvanduyvenvoorde@clac.ca

All applications will be held in confidence.

Trinity Christian School Is Seeking a

PART-TIME DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Responsibilities include:

- Promoting Trinity Christian School
- Fundraising

Your efforts will be focused on:

- Applying unique approaches for the development of financial resources.
- Developing and nurturing long term relationships with key partners of the school.
- Articulating the mission and vision of Trinity Christian School at various events and meetings.
- Maintaining accurate records of fundraising and personal activities.

This position may fit you if you are:

- A committed Christian with excellent communication and organization skills.
- Self motivated and full of zeal for the mission of Trinity Christian School.

Please forward resume to:

Andrew Straatsma, Principal
Trinity Christian School
2170 Itabashi Way
Burlington ON L7M 5B3
Ph. 905-634-3052
Email: trinity@bserv.com

No faxes, please.

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept 18** Sample the world of international development at the **CRWRC Global Bazaar**, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Faith CRC in **Burlington**. Add culture to your décor with crafts, colorful cloths and artifacts handmade in CRWRC project countries. Try a tasty morsel from the multicultural finger food bar. View slideshows, participate in live demos and tap your toes to international rhythms. Kids collect stamps in their "passport" as they visit huts filled with info and photos from the field. For more details phone 905-336-2920 or send an email to hunseh@crcna.ca.
- Oct 28, 29** OCSTA 50th anniversary convention at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**, and the Hamilton District Christian High School; inspirational address: Dr. Anthony Campolo; educational address: Prof. Hugh Cook. website: www.ocsta.org
- Nov. 5** Christian Festival Concert, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, 7:30 pm. Order tickets from Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Ph: 416-636-9779 or email: landmkooy@rogers.com
- Nov. 6, 7** Calvin CRC, **Dundas**, Ont. will celebrate their **50th year**. Come join our celebration! Festivities are being planned. For info: Fred VanderVelde at 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376 or Brenda DeGroot at 905-689-6350 or email: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca

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For more details, see our Calendar of Events.



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Review / Advertising

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evidence of things unseen to prolong existence here

bargain for healing attempt a deal with the Creator
who wanted to hear a whisper of our voice
when all his Godliness showered over us each day
in the carefree sunshine velvet rain golden lilies
slices of buttered flax toast laughter of grandchildren

we chafe at this temporariness wanting Him to break
the fierce cycle of death when it knocks on our door
afraid to recognize that He shied away from miracles
of physical healing curbed the press releases

alleviated pain is hard to remember only one leper
returned to give thanks every healed body will someday

still die the miracle of eternity is the rest of the story
cupped in His scarred hands for the taking

'Earth Against Your Cheek'

Earth Against Your Cheek is the title of Linda Siebenga's latest collection of some 70 poems she has selected for publication, some of which readers of *CC* have read in these pages. There are a few poems written for special occasions – a wedding, a funeral, a birthday, the 40th anniversary of CPJ – but most are the sort that transmute ordinary occasions in special ones – the smell of rain, green shoots sprouting in concrete, wild raspberry branch/ heavy with crimson fruit for picking, the taste of tomato, bursting redness bitten/ dripping down chin.

These are not Sunday school lessons put to rhyme, but a rich, colorful table set with tasty dishes with the poet inviting us to a Thanksgiving meal: "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" But she does it without concealing the searing pain of disease and death that whets our longings for wholeness and the valley without shadows that flows with the river of life, as the poem on the side taken from this excellent collection shows.

The book may be ordered at <http://www.inscribe.org/lindasiebenga/> or by writing her at R.R. #1 Blackfalds, Alberta, Canada T0M 0J0



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